

Brill's Companion to the Reception of Plutarch

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# Brill's Companion to the Reception of Plutarch

*Edited by*

Sophia Xenophontos  
Katerina Oikonomopoulou



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Cover illustration: A portrait of Plutarch on the first folio of Laurentianus Plut. 65.30 (fifteenth century), which contains interpretations and/or translations of some of the *Parallel lives* by different scholars.  
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*Sophia Xenophontos  
Katerina Oikonomopoulou*  
February 2019

## Figures

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# Table of Latin Abbreviations of Titles of Plutarch's *Moralia* with English Translation

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Latin title <sup>a</sup>	Abbreviation	English translation
De liberis educandis	<i>De lib. educ.</i>	<i>On the education of children</i>
De audiendis poetis (Quomodo adulescens poetas audire debeat)	<i>De aud. poet.</i>	<i>On reading the poets</i>
De audiendo (De recta ratione audiendi)	<i>De aud.</i>	<i>On listening to lectures</i>
De adulatore et amico (Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur)	<i>De ad. et am.</i>	<i>On friends and flatterers</i>
De profectibus in virtute (Quomodo quis suos in virtute sentiat profectus)	<i>De prof. in virt.</i>	<i>On progress in virtue</i>
De capienda ex inimicis utilitate	<i>De cap. ex inim.</i>	<i>How to profit from your enemies</i>
De amicorum multitudine	<i>De am. mult.</i>	<i>On having many friends</i>
De fortuna	<i>De fortuna</i>	<i>On fortune</i>
De virtute et vitio	<i>De virt. et vit.</i>	<i>On virtue and vice</i>
Consolatio ad Apollonium	<i>Cons. ad Apoll.</i>	<i>Consolation to Apollonius</i>
De tuenda sanitate praecepta	<i>De tuenda</i>	<i>Advice on health</i>
Coniugalia praecepta	<i>Con. praecc.</i>	<i>Advice on marriage</i>
Septem sapientium convivium	<i>Sept. sap. conv.</i>	<i>Symposium of the seven sages</i>
De superstitione	<i>De sup.</i>	<i>On superstition</i>
Regum et imperatorum apophthegmata	<i>Reg. et imp. apophth.</i>	<i>Sayings of kings and commanders</i>
Apophthegmata Laconica – Instituta Laconica – Lacaenarum apophthegmata	<i>Apophth. Lac.</i>	<i>Spartan sayings</i>
Mulierum virtutes	<i>Mul. virt.</i>	<i>Virtues of women</i>
Quaestiones Romanae	<i>Quaest. Rom.</i>	<i>Roman questions</i>
Quaestiones Graecae	<i>Quaest. Graec.</i>	<i>Greek questions</i>

(cont.)

Latin title <sup>a</sup>	Abbreviation	English translation
Parallela Graeca et Romana	<i>Parall. Graec. et Rom.</i>	<i>Minor parallels</i>
De fortuna Romanorum	<i>De fort. Rom.</i>	<i>On the fortune of the Romans</i>
De Alexandri Magni fortuna aut virtute	<i>De Al. Magn. fort.</i>	<i>On the fortune and virtue of Alexander the Great</i>
Bellone an pace clariores fuerint Athenienses (De gloria Atheniensium)	<i>Bellone an pace</i>	<i>On the glory of Athens</i>
De Iside et Osiride	<i>De Is. et Os.</i>	<i>On Isis and Osiris</i>
De E Delphico (De E apud Delphos)	<i>De E</i>	<i>On the 'E' at Delphi</i>
De Pythiae oraculis	<i>De Pyth. or.</i>	<i>On the Pythia's prophecies</i>
De defectu oraculorum	<i>De def. or.</i>	<i>On the obsolescence of oracles</i>
An virtus doceri possit	<i>An virt. doc.</i>	<i>Whether virtue can be taught</i>
De virtute morali	<i>De virt. mor.</i>	<i>On moral virtue</i>
De cohibenda ira	<i>De coh. ira</i>	<i>On the control of anger</i>
De tranquillitate animi	<i>De tranq. an.</i>	<i>On tranquillity of mind</i>
De fraterno amore	<i>De frat. am.</i>	<i>On brotherly love</i>
De amore prolis	<i>De am. prol.</i>	<i>On the love of offspring</i>
An vitiositas ad infelicitatem sufficiat	<i>An vitiositas</i>	<i>Is vice a sufficient cause of misery?</i>
Animine an corporis affectiones sint peiores	<i>Animine an corp.</i>	<i>Ills of the body and ills of the mind</i>
De garrilitate	<i>De gar.</i>	<i>On talkativeness</i>
De curiositate	<i>De cur.</i>	<i>On curiosity</i>
De cupiditate divitiarum	<i>De cup. div.</i>	<i>On the love of wealth</i>
De vitioso pudore	<i>De vit. pud.</i>	<i>On harmful scrupulousness</i>
De invidia et odio	<i>De inv. et od.</i>	<i>On envy and hatred</i>
De se ipsum citra invidiam laudando (De laude ipsius)	<i>De se ipsum laud.</i>	<i>On inoffensive self-praise</i>

(cont.)

Latin title <sup>a</sup>	Abbreviation	English translation
De sera numinis vindicta	<i>De sera num.</i>	<i>On god's slowness to punish</i>
De fato	<i>Defato</i>	<i>On fate</i>
De genio Socratis (De Socratis daemonio)	<i>De genio Socr.</i>	<i>On the sign of Socrates</i>
De exilio	<i>De exilio</i>	<i>On exile</i>
Consolatio ad uxorem	<i>Cons. ad ux.</i>	<i>Consolation to my wife</i>
Quaestionum Convivalium l. IX	<i>Quaest. conv.</i>	<i>Table Talk</i>
Amatorius	<i>Amatorius</i>	<i>Dialogue on love</i>
Amatoriae narrationes	<i>Am. narr.</i>	<i>Love stories</i>
Maxime cum principibus philosopho esse disserendum (Maxime cum principibus philosophandum esse)	<i>Maxime cum principibus</i>	<i>On the fact that the philosopher ought most of all to converse with leaders</i>
Ad principem ineruditum	<i>Ad princ. iner.</i>	<i>To an uneducated ruler</i>
An seni respublica gerenda sit	<i>An seni</i>	<i>Whether old men should engage in public affairs</i>
Praecepta gerendae reipublicae	<i>Praec. ger. reip.</i>	<i>Political precepts</i>
De unius in republica dominatione, populari statu, et paucorum imperio	<i>De unius</i>	<i>On monarchy, democracy, and oligarchy</i>
De vitando aere alieno	<i>De vit. aer.</i>	<i>That we ought not to borrow</i>
Decem oratorum vitae	<i>Dec. or. vit.</i>	<i>Lives of the ten orators</i>
Comparationis Aristophanis et Menandri epitome	<i>Comp. Ar. et Men.</i>	<i>Summary of a comparison between Aristophanes and Menander</i>
De Herodoti malignitate	<i>De Her. mal.</i>	<i>On the malice of Herodotus</i>
Placita philosophorum	<i>Plac. philos.</i>	<i>Doctrines of the philosophers</i>
Quaestiones naturales	<i>Quaest. nat.</i>	<i>Natural questions</i>
De facie quae in orbe lunae apparat	<i>Defacie</i>	<i>On the face in the moon</i>

(cont.)

Latin title <sup>a</sup>	Abbreviation	English translation
De primo frigido	<i>De prim. frig.</i>	<i>On the first cold</i>
Aqua an ignis utilior sit	<i>Aqua an ignis</i>	<i>Which is more useful, fire or water?</i>
De sollertia animalium (Terrestriane an aquatilia animalia sint callidiora)	<i>De soll. an.</i>	<i>On the intelligence of animals</i>
Gryllus (Bruta animalia ratione uti)	<i>Gryllus</i>	<i>Gryllus</i>
De esu carnium	<i>De esu</i>	<i>On the eating of meat</i>
Quaestiones Platonicae	<i>Quaest. Plat.</i>	<i>Platonic questions</i>
De animae procreatione in Timaeo	<i>De an. proc.</i>	<i>On the creation of the soul in the Timaeus</i>
De Stoicorum repugnantiis	<i>De Stoic. rep.</i>	<i>On Stoic contradictions</i>
Stoicos absurdiora poetis dicere	<i>Stoic. absurd. poet.</i>	<i>Stoic paradoxes are stranger than poets'</i>
De communibus notitiis adversus Stoicos	<i>De comm. not.</i>	<i>Against the Stoics on common conceptions</i>
Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum	<i>Non posse</i>	<i>It is not possible even to live pleasantly according to Epicurus</i>
Adversus Colotem	<i>Adv. Col.</i>	<i>Against Colotes</i>
De latenter vivendo (An recte dicendum sit latenter esse vivendum)	<i>De lat. viv.</i>	<i>On living unknown</i>
De musica	<i>De mus.</i>	<i>On music</i>
Fragmenta	<i>fr.</i>	<i>Frgments</i>

a For the titles we have consulted T. Duff (1999, *Plutarch's Lives: Exploring virtue and vice*. Oxford, xiv–xvii), with minor changes to his orthography; and D.A. Russell's (1973; revised edition 2001, *Plutarch*. London) Appendix (164–172), which provides a list of the works of the *Moralia* in their traditional order alongside full English, Greek, and Latin titles, as well as a list of the paired *Lives* (173–174).

# Table of Latin Abbreviations of Plutarch's Lives

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Theseus	<i>Thes.</i>
Romulus	<i>Rom.</i>
Comparatio Thesei et Romuli	<i>Comp. Thes. et Rom.</i>
Lycurgus	<i>Lyc.</i>
Numa	<i>Num.</i>
Comparatio Lycurgi et Numae	<i>Comp. Lyc. et Num.</i>
Solon	<i>Sol.</i>
Publicola	<i>Publ.</i>
Comparatio Solonis et Publicolae	<i>Comp. Sol. et Publ.</i>
Themistocles	<i>Them.</i>
Camillus	<i>Cam.</i>
Aristides	<i>Arist.</i>
Cato Maior	<i>Ca. Ma.</i>
Comparatio Aristidis et Catonis	<i>Comp. Arist. et Ca. Ma.</i>
Cimon	<i>Cim.</i>
Lucullus	<i>Luc.</i>
Comparatio Cimonis et Luculli	<i>Comp. Cim. et Luc.</i>
Pericles	<i>Per.</i>
Fabius Maximus	<i>Fab.</i>
Comparatio Periclis et Fabii Maximi	<i>Comp. Per. et Fab.</i>
Nicias	<i>Nic.</i>
Crassus	<i>Crass.</i>
Comparatio Niciae et Crassi	<i>Comp. Nic. et Crass.</i>
Alcibiades	<i>Alc.</i>
Marcius Coriolanus	<i>Cor.</i>
Comparatio Alcibiadis et Marcii Coriolani	<i>Comp. Alc. et Cor.</i>
Lysander	<i>Lys.</i>
Sulla	<i>Sull.</i>
Comparatio Lysandri et Sullae	<i>Comp. Lys. et Sull.</i>
Agesilaus	<i>Ages.</i>
Pompeius	<i>Pomp.</i>
Comparatio Agesilai et Pompeii	<i>Comp. Ages. et Pomp.</i>
Pelopidas	<i>Pel.</i>
Marcellus	<i>Marc.</i>
Comparatio Pelopidae et Marcelli	<i>Comp. Pel. et Marc.</i>
Dion	<i>Dion</i>

(cont.)

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Brutus	<i>Brut.</i>
Comparatio Dionis et Bruti	<i>Comp. Dion. et Brut.</i>
Timoleon	<i>Tim.</i>
Aemilius Paulus	<i>Aem.</i>
Comparatio Timoleontis et Aemilii Pauli	<i>Comp. Tim. et Aem.</i>
Demosthenes	<i>Dem.</i>
Cicero	<i>Cic.</i>
Comparatio Demosthenis et Ciceronis	<i>Comp. Dem. et Cic.</i>
Alexander	<i>Alex.</i>
Caesar	<i>Caes.</i>
Sertorius	<i>Sert.</i>
Eumenes	<i>Eum.</i>
Comparatio Sertorii et Eumenis	<i>Comp. Sert. et Eum.</i>
Phocion	<i>Phoc.</i>
Cato Minor	<i>Ca. Mi.</i>
Demetrius	<i>Demetr.</i>
Antonius	<i>Ant.</i>
Comparatio Demetrii et Antonii	<i>Comp. Demetr. et Ant.</i>
Pyrrhus	<i>Pyrrh.</i>
Caius Marius	<i>Mar.</i>
Agis	<i>Agis</i>
Cleomenes	<i>Cleom.</i>
Tiberius Gracchus	<i>TG</i>
Caius Gracchus	<i>CG</i>
Comparatio Agidis et Cleomenis cum Tiberio et Caio	<i>Comp. Ag., Cleom. et Gracch.</i>
Graccho	
Philopoemen	<i>Phil.</i>
Titus Flamininus	<i>Flam.</i>
Comparatio Philopoemenis et Titi Flaminini	<i>Comp. Phil. et Flam.</i>
Aratus	<i>Arat.</i>
Artaxerxes	<i>Art.</i>
Galba	<i>Galba</i>
Otho	<i>Oth.</i>

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## Notes on Editors and Contributors

### *Eran Almagor*

has published on a wide range of topics, including the history of the Achaemenid Empire, its image in Greek literature (especially in Ctesias and the *Persica* works) and Greek Imperial writers, particularly Strabo and Josephus. Among his major interests are the writings of Plutarch, especially the *Lives*, ancient historiography and the reception of antiquity in modern literature and popular culture. He is co-editor of *Ancient Ethnography: New Approaches* (London, 2013) and *The Reception of Ancient Virtues and Vices in Modern Popular Culture* (Leiden, 2017). His current projects include a study of Plutarch and the Hellenistic period and a narratological study of Plutarch's *Lives*.

### *Arkadiy Avdokhin*

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is Professor of Classics at University Carlos III of Madrid and secretary of the Institute of Classical Studies “Lucio Anneo Séneca”. In the last years his main interests are the ancient and medieval tradition of Aristotle's *Politics* (with a new critical edition of the Greek text, 5 vols., Rome 2011–2016) and the reception of Aristotelian political thought (*The Harmony of Conflict*, 2017, with Francisco Lisi). He is preparing a bibliography of the studies on Stobaios (after the monograph *The Anthology of John of Stobi, an Ancient Library from Manuscripts to Printed Editions*, 2008).

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is an Assistant Professor in Classical Studies at the University of Michigan. Her work applies a reception-based approach to the study of Graeco-Roman ideas in medieval Islamic contexts, and examines in particular how Arabic authors use classical texts to construct their own authority and notions of knowledge. She is currently completing a monograph on how Galen and his medieval Islamic successors invoke Plato's *Timaeus* to define medicine and philosophy.

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Professor of Greek language and literature at the University Paris Ouest-Nanterre La Défense and a member of the IUF, specialist in Plutarch's work, passed away on December 14, 2016. Her publications include *Histoire et Morale dans les Vies*

Parallèles de Plutarque (1996, rééd. 2016), *Poétique et création littéraire en Grèce ancienne* (2010), and *Quelques aspects du platonisme de Plutarque. Philosopher en commun, tourner sa pensée vers Dieu* (forthcoming).

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## Note to the Reader

The *Parallel lives* are cited by chapter and section of the Teubner edition of Sintenis (1852–1855), e.g. *Life of Alexander* 17.1. The *Moralia* are cited by Stephanus page (Frankfurt edition of 1599), e.g. 734D–E.

Proper names of ancient authors follow LSJ (9th edn, 1940; revised supplement, 1996). The spelling of late antique and Byzantine names follows, in most cases, *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (1991), e.g. ‘Stobaios’ instead of ‘Stobaeus’, ‘Photios’ instead of ‘Photius’.

Transliteration of Greek and Arabic terms follows the Library of Congress system (<http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsu/romanization/greek.pdf> and <https://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsu/romanization/arabic.pdf> respectively; accessed 3 March 2019).



# Introduction

*Sophia Xenophontos and Katerina Oikonomopoulou*

## 1 Plutarch: Life and Works

Plutarch (c. 45–125 AD) was born into an aristocratic family in the small town of Chaeronea in Boeotia, mainland Greece, where he spent much of his life.<sup>1</sup> He also visited Athens (for his advanced studies in the Platonic Academy under Ammonius) and Egypt, and also travelled to Rome to teach philosophy and make or strengthen high-profile connections. His network of acquaintances included, for example, the consulars Q. Sosius Senecio, to whom some of his works are dedicated, and L. Mestrius Florus, who granted him his Roman citizenship. Later sources (Eusebios, *Suda*) report that Plutarch received the rare award of the consular insignia (*ornamenta/insignia consularia*) from the Emperor Trajan, and that he was imperial procurator in Achaea under the Emperor Hadrian, both details testifying to his important role in contemporary politics. From 96 AD until his death Plutarch was priest of the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi, devoting his energies to the reorganisation of the shrine, which led the local people to dedicate a portrait bust of him as a token of gratitude and honour.

One of antiquity's most prolific authors, Plutarch wrote on a wide-range of topics and scholarly interests. The “Lamprias Catalogue”, an inventory of his works dated to the third or fourth century AD, encompasses 227 items, of which 78 are extant. His output is traditionally divided into two parts: on the one hand, the miscellaneous works conventionally entitled the *Moralia*, and on the other his biographical projects, the *Lives of the Roman emperors*, of which only *Galba* and *Otho* survive, and the *Parallel lives* for which he is best known and which examines pairs of distinguished Greek and Roman heroes through the lens of moralism and characterisation. Plutarch's writings are permeated by the spirit of the collaboration between Greece and Rome in response to contemporary

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<sup>1</sup> On Plutarch's life and work, see notably Jones (1971) and Russell (1983). For an introduction to the *Parallel lives*, see the monograph by Duff (1999). For specialised studies on different strands of his work and thought, readers are referred to the following indicative studies: on Plutarch and history, Pelling (2002); on his popular philosophy, Van Hoof (2010); on the relationship between *Lives* and *Moralia*, the edited volume by Nikolaidis (2008); on his concept of ethical education, Xenophontos (2016); on his polemical philosophy, Kechagia (2011); on Plutarch's sympotic literature, Klotz and Oikonomopoulou (2011); on love and politics in the *Lives*, Beneker (2012); on Plutarch's natural philosophy, Meeusen (2016).

exigencies at a time when Rome was the administrative and political power in the Mediterranean world, and Greece was Rome's province, but also the key cultural player in the region. Other characteristics of Plutarch's age that have left their mark on his oeuvre are the sophisticated emulation of the literary models of the Classical period in a framework of cultural renaissance, the so-called Second Sophistic, and a creative synthesis of miscellaneous knowledge drawn from popular philosophy, religion, metaphysics, psychology, and literary criticism, to mention only a few of the relevant sources.<sup>2</sup>

## 2 Plutarch's Reception: Points of Interest

Plutarch's extensive *Nachleben* has long been emphasised in both modern historiography and popular approaches to the ancient author. However, that Plutarch constitutes an exceptional case study for any discussion relating to the reception of ancient literature has not as yet been firmly established. This is due to the fact that the precise aspects and conditions that might account for his extensive afterlife have been left strangely unspecified or disconnected from one another, since we lack a systematic treatment addressing the dynamic impact of his work on various – often radically different – textual and contextual environments. One distinctive feature of Plutarch's influence, for example, is the generic diversity we encounter in the course of the migration of his texts, apparently a unique phenomenon in comparison to other ancient authors. There are translations (for instance, in Syriac, or later on in Latin, English, and French), paraphrases and commentaries as early as the second century AD (just after his death), anthologies and selective incorporation of Plutarchan fragments into patristic, rhetorical or philosophical works of late antiquity, references to Plutarch in epitomes, lexica, and grammatical treatises in medieval Greek, critical editions, and interpretative analyses originating in late Byzantium and continuing in Renaissance Italy, from where they have spread all over the rest of Europe and America right up to the present day.

But what made Plutarch so powerfully attractive? Which strands of his intellectual contribution so enthralled his later peers, prompting this diversified reception? Partly, it was his high moral tone and the emphasis on virtuous habits as a salient characteristic of a philosophically-minded life. This is already noted in the late third/early fourth century AD by Menander Rhetor, who declares that the *Parallel lives* are "most useful ... for varied educational

<sup>2</sup> A useful study on the Second Sophistic is by Whitmarsh (2005). For the intellectual setting of Plutarch's age, see e.g. Trapp (2007) and Swain (1996).

purposes", as "they are full of stories, apophthegms, and proverbs".<sup>3</sup> In similar fashion, Plutarch's moralistic spirit, this time in a Christian context, is attested several centuries later in John Mauropous, who, in a famous epigram in the form of a prayer to Christ, requests that of all the pagan thinkers only Plato and Plutarch should be saved, as they were the only ones to have come close to following Christ's preaching in their thoughts and manner.<sup>4</sup> Another reason for Plutarch's success is the philosophical content of his works, which constituted a basic source for later Platonism, for example for the Neoplatonic philosopher Porphyry, who in his "philosophical chronographia" enthusiastically acclaimed Plutarch.<sup>5</sup> On another level, the *Lives* in particular functioned as a rich historical springboard for John Xiphilinos' *Epitome of Cassius Dio's Roman history* or John Zonaras' *Epitome of histories*, investing their narratives with authority and credibility.

Furthermore, the rhetorical charm of Plutarchan writings coupled with the intellectual pleasure provided by the rare antiquarian stories they report account for their inclusion in elementary school exercises in late antiquity and the Middle Ages, such as in the *progymnasmata* by Nikephoros Basilakes.<sup>6</sup> And closely associated with that, the extent of Plutarch's reputation must be largely attributed to the encyclopaedic character of his texts: offering a panorama of the history and culture of a luminous distant past, Plutarch's oeuvre resonated with later authors' interests in a wide range of learning. Several sources refer to Plutarch as a repository of universal knowledge and ancient wisdom: for example the seventh-century historian Theophylact Simocatta calls him "a wealth of knowledge"<sup>7</sup> and the *Greek Anthology* contains an epigram addressed to Plutarch, which extols his books for saturating people's minds with endless historical and popular discussions.<sup>8</sup> In the later Middle Ages, in the Greek East, reading Plutarch's texts was an index of culture and education among elite scholars.<sup>9</sup> And on the eve of the Renaissance, in a context of heightened cultural contacts and knowledge exchange between Byzantium and the Latin West, Francesco Filelfo, writing to Cardinal Bessarion, complains bitterly that his copy containing all of Plutarch's *Lives*, a "remarkable book"

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<sup>3</sup> Menander Rhetor, *On epideictic speeches* 392, ed. Russell and Wilson 122, 28–31.

<sup>4</sup> John Mauropous, *Epigram* no. 43, ed. De Lagarde 24.

<sup>5</sup> Porphyry, fr. 24, ed. Jacoby *FGrH* 260.

<sup>6</sup> Nikephoros Basilakes, *Progymnasma* 11 entitled "Narrative (*diēgēma*), also mentioned by Plutarch in the *Parallel Lives*", ed. Pignani 82–85.

<sup>7</sup> Theophylact Simocatta, *Physical questions* 38, 7, ed. Massa Positano 35, 6–7.

<sup>8</sup> *Greek Anthology*, *Epigrammata demonstrativa* 220, ed. Cougny 327.

<sup>9</sup> Demetrios Kydones, *Epistle* 293, ed. Loenertz 213, but also in the letters exchanged between Theodorus Metochites and Nikephoros Gregoras.

by his own account, has never been returned to him by one of its borrowers.<sup>10</sup> His anguish is such, he says, that he is unable to bear the pain of the loss of “such richness”.<sup>11</sup> Filelfo’s angst partly reflects a more widespread appreciation of Plutarch, whose rediscovery in the West after about ten centuries of resounding absence must have been a striking event. Finally, Plutarch’s texts also provided impressive material for works of dialogue (e.g. Athenaeus) or staged drama (e.g. Shakespeare), because they were valued for their aesthetic merits.

Of course, all the above examples highlight the admiration and approval shown by Plutarch’s successors, which is far from the whole story. Later engagement with Plutarch also involved polemic and sometimes denunciation, which could be expressed either directly or more allusively. An intriguing case in point comes from the early Byzantine verse panegyrist George Pisides (fl. seventh century), whose fictional apostrophes to the ancient author were couched in subversive irony: “Plutarch, remain silent, you who wrote the *Parallel lives*. Why are you tiring yourself collecting lives of generals?”<sup>12</sup> Pisides’ derogatory remark that the *Lives* is nothing more than a pointless endeavour that should be doomed to silence gains added emphasis from his calculated choice of vocabulary: Plutarch is said to be “collecting” biographies, insinuating a process of compilation rather than illumination. Another form of critical discussion of Plutarchan sources occurs in communications between scholarly men, who were keen to offer brief commentaries on the modes and techniques Plutarch made use of when dealing with particular issues or characters.<sup>13</sup> The critical assessment of the content and style of Plutarch’s texts is therefore one main strand of his reception, as is the evaluation of his personality and life too, which in this case seems to be entirely positive. An epigram in the *Greek Anthology* suggests – by means of an astute wordplay – that Plutarch could not have produced a suitable biography as a pair to his own life, because there was no one equal to him; he was simply unparalleled!<sup>14</sup> All the above are aspects about which we shall read more in this volume.

<sup>10</sup> Francesco Filelfo, *Epistle* 51, ed. Legrand 95.

<sup>11</sup> Francesco Filelfo, *Epistle* 55, ed. Legrand 102–103.

<sup>12</sup> George Pisides, *Heraclias* 1, 110–112, ed. Pertusi 245.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Choniates, vol. 2, *Epistle* 111, ed. Lampros 210.

<sup>14</sup> *Greek Anthology*, Book 16, Epigram 331 (Agathias Scholasticus).

### 3 Filling a Gap: the Contribution of the Present Volume

Despite Plutarch's rich reception history, there is still no synthetic analysis that explores the topic in its own right. The only worthwhile overview of the subject is that by Rudolf Hirzel, published over a century ago.<sup>15</sup> General discussions on Plutarch such as those by Konrad Ziegler and Donald Russell offer brief informative surveys of Plutarch's influence, which tend to be selective in the material they use.<sup>16</sup> Other books are restricted to Plutarch's reception in particular areas and/or periods, for example Renaissance Italy<sup>17</sup> or the nineteenth century,<sup>18</sup> or have a limited textual focus, examining, for instance, the reliance of late antique philosophers on Plutarch's religious and philosophical works in the *Moralia*.<sup>19</sup> Readers interested in Plutarch's legacy can avail themselves of the recently published Blackwell *Companion to Plutarch* which contains a few relevant chapters but again only for key periods, some of which are covered rather broadly.<sup>20</sup>

The reception of Plutarch is awaiting a comprehensive treatment that will ideally replace previous contributions in terms of scope and approach. This volume aims to offer an all-encompassing analysis of Plutarch's influence over successive periods, leading to a reconsideration of his diachronic values as a biographer and philosopher, and enabling us to draw comparisons as to the aspects of his thought that were more or less appealing to different audiences and communities. One of the book's main strengths is its emphasis on the great authority of Plutarch in late antiquity and Byzantium (dealt with in Section 2). This subject has not previously been tackled apart from in some isolated articles specialising in particular Byzantine authors or texts.<sup>21</sup> Thus this section decisively contributes to a reassessment of the role of Byzantine scholars in the transmission of Plutarch's corpus by showing that their engagement

<sup>15</sup> Hirzel (1912: 74–206).

<sup>16</sup> Ziegler (1951: 947–962); Russell (1973: 143–158). More recent overviews covering the same ground may be found in Gianakaris (1970: 129–144), Sirinelli (2000: 443–474), Grafton, Most, and Settis (2010: 747–750). On the reception of the *Moralia*, see Flacelière and Irigoin (1987: CCXXVII–CCLXXXIV).

<sup>17</sup> E.g. Pade (2007).

<sup>18</sup> Guerrier (2012). Cf. Gallo (1998), Aguilar and Alfageme (2006), Pace and Cacciatore (2013), North and Mack (2018).

<sup>19</sup> Roig Lanzillotta and Muñoz Gallarte (2012).

<sup>20</sup> In the *Blackwell Companion to Plutarch* (Beck, 2014) the only one out of the seven chapters dealing with Plutarch's reception starts with antiquity and finishes with the Italian Renaissance; similarly, the chapter in the *Cambridge Companion to Plutarch* (Humble, forthcoming) that explores Plutarch in Byzantium covers eight centuries.

<sup>21</sup> E.g. the survey by Garzya (1998) or the articles by Xenophontos (2014a) and (2014b).

with the Plutarchan material extended well beyond the need for preservation to include creative reshaping and modifications. Not claiming to be exhaustive and focusing exclusively on literature (and not discussing art for instance), the *Companion to the Reception of Plutarch* has been designed with the above mentioned qualities in mind and aspires above all to encourage further research in this important area in Plutarchan studies.

In the light of the above, this volume is targeted at scholars and students of Plutarch, as well as anyone interested in the reception of the classical tradition. It will also appeal to intellectual and cultural historians, and a wide range of scholars whose fields of expertise overlaps with Plutarch's reception in particular periods: for instance, those working on late antiquity and Byzantine studies, or on the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. More widely, we hope that this Companion will make some impact upon a broader class of readers and promote public appreciation of Plutarch's dynamic presence in the history of literature over the course of eighteen centuries.

#### 4 Approach and Chapters

The chapters that comprise this volume approach Plutarch's reception from a variety of interpretative avenues. They track the appeal and reputation of Plutarch as a philosopher, intellectual, and biographer in later centuries; they discuss the uses, adaptations, and translations of his writings by various authors and in various languages; and they explore the resonance of his thought and philosophy across different cultures (Greek, Roman, Syriac, Arabic, Byzantine, Italian, English, French, German, American, Hebrew). 'Reception' is conceived as a dynamic process of engagement with Plutarch's oeuvre and thought, one that calls attention not just to the circulation and variant interpretations of Plutarch's works themselves in later times, but also to the new literary genres and intellectual traditions that Plutarch inspired and which claimed him as their forebear.<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, the chapters seek to shed light on the concerns of the societies or cultures that read Plutarch and deferred to his authority across the centuries, but also to prompt new questions about the different ways in which Plutarch was reflected upon and appropriated over time, often in ways that are foreign to his contemporary interpreters.

It follows from this that the sequence of chapters within the volume is not strictly chronological: although the volume's section-divisions do distinguish between different chronological phases in Plutarch's reception from the worlds

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<sup>22</sup> See Hardwick (2003: 1–11); Hardwick and Stray (2008: 1–5).

of the high Roman Empire, late antiquity and Byzantium to the Renaissance, Enlightenment, and the modern era, the topics of the chapters within them reflect thematic, as well as chronological criteria. In other words, the volume's primary aim is not to put the stress on continuities in Plutarch's reception, or to suggest that it should be conceived as an uninterrupted process. As reception studies point out, the afterlife of ancient authors is marked by discontinuities,<sup>23</sup> and Plutarch's *Nachleben* is no exception to this. Above all, the chapters seek to promote understanding of the conditions and contexts in which Plutarch's writings and thought were invested with significance in the long history of their afterlife. Sometimes these contexts point to enduring constants in the way Plutarch has been approached over time, and at other moments they reveal radical re-interpretations and reappraisals of his ideas and literary output, which in turn responded to particular historical and cultural concerns.

The volume begins with a set of chapters that explore Plutarch's reception within imperial Graeco-Roman antiquity. As **Maria Vamvouri Ruffy** and **Katerina Oikonomopoulou** discuss, Plutarch's appeal was considerable in both Greek- and Latin-speaking intellectual circles of the Roman imperial era. Particularly his *Table talk* inspired miscellanistic writings by both Greek and Latin authors such as Aulus Gellius, Apuleius, Athenaeus, and Macrobius, which employ the symposium as a device for imparting knowledge. Plutarch's reputation resided primarily in his activity as a Platonic philosopher in this period and indeed, as **Mauro Bonazzi** shows, his philosophical views were taken into serious account by other Platonist thinkers of the high Roman Empire. **Katarzyna Jaźdżewska**'s chapter, next, examines a comparatively less well known aspect of Plutarch's imperial reception, namely, the influence of his views on language and his linguistic choices on the tradition of Atticism, in the era of the so-called Second Sophistic. The papyrological evidence, which **Thomas Schmidt** discusses in his chapter, corroborates the testimony of the imperial authors, as the papyri preserve comparatively more fragments of *Moralia*-works than *Lives*. Equally revealingly, they point to a very early circulation of the *Table talk*, possibly within thirty years of Plutarch's death.

Plutarch's writings offer fertile ground for understanding the interaction between the pagan and Christian traditions in the first centuries AD, and the contributions of **Arkadiy Avdokin** and **Sébastien Morlet** shed light on how early Christian theologians such as Clement of Alexandria and Eusebios of Caesarea turned to him in order to refute pagan religion and, through this process, shape their own theological discourse. Neoplatonism was the main philosophical system with which early Christianity engaged in dialogue,

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<sup>23</sup> Hardwick (2003: 2–5).

and, as **Elsa Simonetti** and **Geert Roskam** point out, its key representatives (Porphyry, Proklos, Simplikios, and Damaskios) showed particular interest in Plutarch's theological thought. Plutarch's significance as a philosophical authority in later antiquity is confirmed by the presence of several excerpts from his works in Ioannes Stobaios' *Anthologion*, the most important anthology to survive from the ancient world. The *Anthologion*, as **Michele Curnis** argues, also offers testimony to the existence of a rich 'Plutarchan tradition' in the later Roman Empire.

Our understanding of Plutarch's afterlife in the medieval period is complemented by Syriac literature, as **Alberto Rigolio** underlines. Syriac translations were made of at least two works from the *Moralia*, which attest the interest of some Christian readers in Plutarch's moral thought. As in the case of Stobaios, Syriac and Arabic readers of Plutarch were familiar with his genuine works, as much as with pseudepigrapha attached to the Plutarchan tradition. As **Aileen Das** and **Pauline Koetschet** show, pseudo-Plutarchan works such as the *Doctrines of the philosophers* circulated widely in the Arabic world among philosophers, scientists, doxographers, and theologians, and played an important role in early Arabic philosophy (ninth–tenth centuries).

With the Byzantine Empire a new chapter in Plutarch's reception opens, in which the *Lives* come to the fore for the first time. **András Németh**, **Eudoxia Delli**, and **Diether Reinsch** discuss how important Byzantine authors of the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries such as Photios, Arethas, Niketas Magistros, and Michael Psellos showed a new appreciation for biography and thus established a solid basis for the reception of the *Lives* in the centuries to come. Psellos' rich oeuvre especially is revealing of how Plutarch's philosophical thought functioned as an important point of reference for Byzantine theologians, at the same time as his biographical writings offered a model for Byzantine historiography's focus on the moral character and political virtues of leaders. The interest in Plutarchan philosophy and biography continues in later centuries as well: **Theofili Kampianaki** examines John Zonaras' (twelfth-century) *Epitome of history*, a chronicle of world history that is distinctive due to its pronounced interest in Roman history (especially Republican Rome), and which, accordingly, makes extensive use of Plutarch's Roman *Lives*; **Michael Grünbart**, next, discusses Plutarch's reception in Byzantium's twelfth-century literate culture, across the genres of epistolography, rhetoric, historiography, and the novel. **Alicia Simpson** focuses on the work of Niketas Choniates, who wrote after the 1204 siege of Constantinople by the Crusaders. As she shows, Choniates' historiographical work and panegyrical speeches for the Byzantine emperors are modelled on Plutarch's *exempla* of leadership and morality, found in politicians and generals such as Pericles. The availability of manuscripts was

instrumental to Plutarch's appeal in this era: **Inmaculada Pérez Martín**'s chapter underscores the key role played by the thirteenth-century scholar Maximos Planoudes in the transmission especially of *Moralia*-manuscripts. Plutarch continued to be read in the last centuries of the Byzantine Empire, up until its fall to the Ottomans in 1453: **Sophia Xenophontos** and **Stephanos Efthymiadis** explore the dialogue of two important late Byzantine intellectuals, Theodore Metochites and Nikephoros Xanthopoulos, respectively, with Plutarch's work in their scholarly, rhetorical, historiographical, and hagiographical writings. Metochites is especially distinctive in that he composed a biographical essay on Plutarch, merging it with aspects of his own autobiography. Metochites and Xanthopoulos are not the only readers of Plutarch in this late period, as **Florin Leonte** shows: Plutarch's writings exercised considerable influence on Byzantine orators of the Palaiologan period, particularly in terms of their use of the *synkrisis*.

Moving on to the period of the Renaissance, **Marianne Pade** and **Fabio Stok** examine the ways in which key Italian intellectuals such as Leonardo Bruni and Angelo Poliziano formed important stepping-stones in Plutarch's reception. Bruni and Poliziano were avid readers of Plutarch, produced translations of Plutarchan writings into Latin and engaged with his political and moral thought in ways which show that, for them, Plutarch was an important medium for accessing the world and ideas of Greek and Roman antiquity. The Renaissance also brought about the first French translation of the entirety of Plutarch's works by Jacques Amyot (discussed by **†Françoise Frazier and Olivier Guerrier**), the first English translation of the *Parallel lives* by Sir Thomas North (discussed by **Michele Lucchesi**), as well as a variety of Latin translations of the *Moralia* (discussed by **Francesco Becchi**). These translations played an instrumental role to the engagement of celebrated Renaissance thinkers like Montaigne and poets like Shakespeare with Plutarch's works: Montaigne's *Essais*, as **Christopher Edelman** shows, include a great number of extracts from Plutarch's works, and treat Plutarch as an important philosophical and moral authority. Through Montaigne, Plutarch's thought had a key role to play in important political debates of France in this period. Shakespeare's tragedies, as **Miryana Dimitrova** points out, not only mine Plutarch for their cast of historical characters but also engage in dialogue with Plutarch's portraits of politicians and generals (especially in the *Lives*) in their characterisation, appropriating them into their Elizabethan context.

Plutarch's popularity reached a peak in France between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, as **Francesco Manzini** demonstrates: authors such as Voltaire, Rousseau, and Stendhal turned to his biographical and philosophical writings for moral and political instruction, seeking to respond to broader

debates about issues such as the value of the Classics and the character of education. In eighteenth-century Germany too, as **Paul Bishop** discusses, Goethe looked up to Plutarch as a literary figure and biographer: some of Goethe's most celebrated works, such as the *Faust*, self-consciously echo Plutarch's ideas, while Goethe's methodological reflections on writing autobiography were formulated in dialogue with Plutarch's legacy of biographical writing. In the Modern Greek Enlightenment on the other hand, as **Sophia Xenophontos** underlines, Plutarch was one of the ancient authors who were deemed essential reading for the education and cultural improvement of the new nation. The work of the scholar and intellectual Adamantios Koraes was instrumental to this: Koraes produced editions of Plutarch's writings and, in his *Prolegomena* to these editions, he offered a biography of Plutarch with an explicit political agenda, focusing on issues of cultural identity. The prints which accompanied these editions also focussed on questions of identity and the role of education.

The nineteenth century initiates a new phase in Plutarch's afterlife, marked by a steady loss in popularity. Plutarch's reception in Britain played a key role in this process. In Victorian Britain, according to **Isobel Hurst**, the *Lives* was familiar reading, even as Plutarch's reliability as a historian was put to question. Plutarch retained his appeal primarily because he was an important influence for Shakespeare. As **David Ricks** discusses next, Shakespeare and Plutarch were important reference-points for the Modern Greek poet Cavafy, whose poetry often bases its moral and philosophical reflection on the Hellenistic and Roman past. Plutarch's cultural position as a Greek writer under Roman rule had an appeal to Cavafy as a Greek citizen living under British hegemony in Egypt. In the United States, as **Frieda Klotz** shows, eighteenth-century British neoclassicism was originally the main reason for Plutarch's popularity in elite circles. But figures such as the poet, essayist, and lecturer Ralph Waldo Emerson repurposed Plutarch for the American context, by composing biographies in emulation of Plutarch's *Lives*, as well as an essay "Plutarch", in which he expounded his enthusiasm for Plutarch's thought and educational value as an author.

The volume concludes with the contributions of **Aurelio Pérez Jiménez** and **Eran Almagor**, who explore Plutarch's reception in Spain and in Hebrew culture, respectively. Translations of Plutarch's works in Spanish and in Hebrew, the literary cultures of Spain and the Jewish world and even political speech in Israel point to an ongoing dialogue with Plutarch's thought, even as Plutarch no longer enjoys the same popularity as in the past.

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## **PART 1**

### *The Early Fame*

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## Plutarch in Macrobius and Athenaeus

*Maria Vamvouri Ruffy*

This chapter deals with the reception and legacy of Plutarch in Athenaeus and Macrobius. It highlights common threads and differences between Plutarch's *Table talk*, Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae* and Macrobius' *Saturnalia*, three literary works that bring to light the convivial and erudite discussions that graced idealised banquets in Greece and Rome. First, it will show how certain themes depicted in *Table talk* have been incorporated and re-elaborated by Athenaeus and Macrobius in order to be adapted to the specific context of each work. These include the transmission of knowledge, memory, harmony and conviviality, which are the pillars of a successful banquet in *Table talk*. This chapter will also explore how *logos* (tale, conversation), another essential component of the erudite symposium, is presented in the three works through metaphors and references to other texts, with particular attention to the culinary metaphor of *logos* and Helen's tale (*logos*) in the wedding banquet at Sparta.

Before getting to the heart of the matter, we may observe that an examination of the reception of Plutarch's *Table talk* should take into account the fact that such an erudite work exploits a rich literary and philosophical tradition and that a great part of this material was also used by later authors such as Athenaeus and Macrobius. Consequently, studying the reception of Plutarch amounts to considering his work as a link in the transmission of a particular literary and philosophical production. We should therefore be wary of claiming that specific topics or literary devices found in Athenaeus' and Macrobius' works can be traced back exclusively to *Table talk*, when in fact both draw their inspiration from several other authors to whom Plutarch also refers. While Plutarch's influence may undoubtedly be traced, we should not exclude the contribution of a common literary heritage utilised by all three authors. This chapter aims also to bring to light the literary strata, the subtexts or background texts that infuse Plutarch's, Athenaeus' and Macrobius' works.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On the "background text" (*arrière-texte* in French) which is both a construction of the author and the reader and which is related to the notion of latency and of cultural assumptions, see Gladieu, Pottier, Trouvé (2013). Cf. also Bellemain-Noël (2001: 11–37) who uses the term *interlecture*.

## 1      *Table Talk* and the Transmission of Knowledge

The nine books of the *Table talk*, written between 89 and 116 AD, are addressed in the form of letters to Sosius Senecio, a Roman consul who is also the dedicatee of the *Parallel lives*. The narrator recreates discussions in the course of certain symposia in Greece and Rome, in which he participated.<sup>2</sup> In these symposia, an intellectual elite of grammarians, philosophers, musicians, orators, physicians, politicians – Greek or Roman, gathered together, invited by a different host every time.<sup>3</sup> Harmony and conviviality characterise these symposia. The conversations tackle diverse topics, related, for example, to physiology, physical phenomena, arboriculture, literature and cults. Often, the guests begin a discussion concerning the traditional elements of a banquet in order to clarify their origin, to understand their meaning and to define their use. In this way, the wearing of floral crowns, the function of the banquet's president, the musical entertainments, the types of proper conversations, form starting points for several erudite and well-argued discussions. The element of mixing and the heterogeneous aspect of these discussions (*memeigmena deigmata*, 629C–D) constitute important compositional principles of the *Table talk* that associate it with the *miscellanea*, i.e. various pieces of writing of different authors, which were very popular during the imperial era.<sup>4</sup>

Curiosity, love for learning, willingness for remembrance and new ideas as well as the element of astonishment are the starting points for discussing, displaying and transmitting knowledge. The combination of these triggering elements in Plutarch's *Table talk* seems to be present in Athenaeus and Macrobius as well, although obviously in different degrees. In the *Table talk*, it is through the dynamic process of questions and answers on different topics that guests are practising philosophy. Consequently, they lean on the tradition of the Socratic *zētēsis*, and above all of the Aristotelian *Problēmata*.<sup>5</sup> The guests thus satisfy their curiosity and feed their souls, as it is clearly claimed by the narrator:

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2 For an introduction to the *Table talk*, cf. Klotz and Oikonomopoulou (2011); König (2012: 60–89); Vamvouri Ruffy (2012).

3 On the profile of the guests, see Rodrigues and al. (2010: 15–52).

4 Cf. Mandonio (2003); Morgan (2011); König (2011).

5 Cf. Oikonomopoulou (2011: 108–112), and Klotz and Oikonomopoulou (2011: 18–21). The verb *zētein* and the word *zētēsis* appear very frequently in the *Table talk*. Cf. 612E, 613C, 635B, 646A, 666A, 673B, 694D, 700C, 701E. For Plutarch's firm acquaintance with the Aristotelian *Natural problems* (as exemplified most clearly in his *Natural questions*), see also Meeusen (2016: 75–84).

But when the body is comfortable and at peace, then at last the soul, released from care and servitude, can devote itself to its own pleasures and feast on ideas, learning, tales of the past, and speculation about unusual questions (*tō zētein ti tōn perittōn*).

*Table talk* 673A<sup>6</sup>

Their yearning for learning can be measured in their admiration for Aristotle's polymathy, which constitutes a stimulus for further inquiry.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the fact that remembrance contributes to the process of learning is clearly emphasised by the narrator in the preface to Book 2, where he argues that "often remembering leads to the same thing as learning does".

The desire for learning and polymathy is frequently accompanied by a certain astonishment regarding a fact, a word or a given custom, as indicated by the recurrence of the words *thaumaston*, *thaumasas*, *thaumasai* used at the beginning of certain questions. The guest Mestrius Florus stresses the connection between practising philosophy, astonishment and inquiry:

"In general", he went on, "the man who demands to see the logic of each and every thing destroys the wonder (*to thaumasion*) in all things. Whenever the logical explanation for anything eludes us, we begin to be puzzled (*to aporein*), and therefore to be philosophers (*to philosophein*)".

*Table talk* 680C–D

The erudite questions and answers allow young people, newcomers in practising philosophy, to learn the art of inquiry by using plausible and probable arguments.<sup>8</sup> From this viewpoint, the discussions aim also to educate, which is the purpose of the work as a whole. Indeed, the narrator prefaces the collection as being the reviviscence of a memory, the goal of which is the fact of learning (629D–E).

<sup>6</sup> I have used the translation of Clement and Hoffleit (1961).

<sup>7</sup> As Oikonomopoulou (2011: 108) remarks, polymathy and the peripatetic tradition are important aspirational paradigms in imperial literature. On the admiration for Aristotle and for his polymathy, cf. *Quaest. conv.* 694D, 676E, 675B, 734D.

<sup>8</sup> *Quaest. conv.* 649A, 744B–C. Kechagia (2011) explains that the young people initiated to philosophy are aware of the criteria of plausibility and probability of some explanations and that they are taught to lead a *zētēsis* using reason. See for instance 641C, 664C.

## 2 Athenaeus as Reader of Plutarch's Work: Commenting on the Convivial Experience

Athenaeus of Naucratis, an author of the second century AD, recreates the erudite discussions of twenty-three guests who take part in a banquet organised by the eminent Roman citizen Larensis, whose monumental library serves as the stimulating scenery of the event.<sup>9</sup> This work comprises fifteen volumes and constitutes a long erudite discussion, which probably unfolds over a period of four days.<sup>10</sup> It includes narratives, lists and quotations from authors of the past. The text and the guests' interventions are characterised by excessive talking, as eloquently highlighted by the terms *logodiarroias*, flux of words, and *glossalgian*, wordiness, used by the guests themselves.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, it is quite difficult to conceive that this continuous flow of words, at times pedantic, actually took place. Athenaeus, unlike Plutarch, is not particularly interested in presenting these conversations as realistic.<sup>12</sup> In fact, the epitomiser of Athenaeus' Book 1 implicitly comments on the implausible aspect of the discussions when he claims that the deipnosophists "allegedly" (*dēthen*, 1.1c) attended the banquet.

Athenaeus seems to be familiar with the *Table talk* to the extent that through Plutarch of Alexandria, a grammarian and deipnosophist, we are somehow reminded of Plutarch of Chaeronea's ghost-like presence. According to Aurélien Berra, the Alexandrian origin of the guest Plutarch is a hint to Plutarch of Chaeronea, a scholar worthy of the *Mouseion* in Alexandria.<sup>13</sup> Plutarch of Chaeronea's name is only mentioned on a few occasions in Athenaeus' work, while some parts of the *Deipnosophistae* echo the *Table talk*.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, following Plutarch's example, Athenaeus maintains a courteous relationship with

<sup>9</sup> On the guests' profile, cf. Romeri (2002: 278–282), Nadeau (2010: 84–90). On the construction of their knowledge through the recontextualisation of quotations, cf. Jacob (2004). See also Jacob (2000) on the connection between Athenaeus' erudition and the tradition of Hellenic and Roman libraries.

<sup>10</sup> On the division of Athenaeus' text into fifteen volumes, originals or abbreviated, based on thirty volumes, cf. Romeri (2002: 254, n. 14); Jacob (2001: XL–XLI). On the work's date, see Nadeau (2010: 83–84). On the duration of Larensis' banquet, cf. Rodriguez-Noriega Guillén (2000: 250–254). I have used the translation of Gulick (1961).

<sup>11</sup> Ath. *Deipn.* 22e; 159e; These guests take a critical look at talking excessively and indirectly at erudition. According to Whitmarsh (2000: 310–331), the text's openness and variability suggests that *Deipnosophistae* is a subversive text within and against erudition.

<sup>12</sup> König (2012: 95). On the pedantic aspect and also the pleasure in the *Deipnosophistae*, see Davidson (2000).

<sup>13</sup> Berra (2005). Cf. Bréchet (2007a).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Ath. *Deipn.* 52d–e; 390d.

an eminent Roman, despite his “patronising interest”.<sup>15</sup> And, in a way that is similar to Plutarch's, in addressing Sosius Senecio in the *Table talk*, Athenaeus addresses Timocrates at the beginning of his books. A direct influence could not therefore be excluded. Points of contact can be detected in some topics of conversation, for instance, in Athenaeus' reuse of an anecdote about a milk drinker and in another one about the poet Antagoras.<sup>16</sup> It can also be surmised in the presentation of fish as an *opson*, an Homeric *hapax*, and in topics such as the Pythagoreans' refusal to eat fish, or the effects of wearing crowns during the banquet.

Beyond these thematic similarities related to specific passages, the organisation of the text itself demonstrates Athenaeus' reception of Plutarch. The discussions are marked by a certain degree of unity : this is afforded by the banquet itself and its components, on which the guests comment and which they seek to explain as the event goes on. Therefore, as in the *Table talk*, the convivial experience enriches the guests' discussions. Athenaeus is probably inspired by as well as amplifies this characteristic of the Plutarchan symposium. Accordingly, the conversation is engendered mainly by the food dishes which succeed one another. Sometimes the opposite occurs: a conversation engenders a dish or an object, which is therefore admired by the guests. According to the epitomiser, the convivial discussions imitate the luxury of Larensis' meal and the elaboration of Athenaeus' book mimics the speeches at the table.<sup>17</sup> As a result, the *hors d'oeuvres* are discussed first (Books 1–4), then the main courses (5–9) and eventually the symposium (10–15). The variety of the dishes, served during this sumptuous banquet, is reflected in the variety of words that spur relentlessly one after the other, on this occasion.

Athenaeus' guests display their knowledge in the form of questions and answers, a model also found in Plutarch's work, with curiosity being the driving force for starting a conversation. Ulpian, for example, is portrayed by the epitomiser as someone who continually launches into investigations (*synecheis zētēseis*, 1.1d) and who claims that inquiries are “nutrients” for the guests (*zētēseis gar sitoumetha*, 9.398b). Incidentally, the discussion in *Deipnosophistae* often continues and is renewed once a topic is deemed “worthy of investigation” (*axion zētēsai; tōn axiōn zētēseōs; ouk anaxion einai zētēseōs*), or when an issue must be resolved.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the love of learning as well

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Whitmarsh (2000).

<sup>16</sup> See the resemblances between Plu. *Quaest. conv.* 660E, 668C–D, 667F–668A, 677C–E, 728E on the one hand and Ath. *Deipn.* 44c, 340f, 276e–f, 423e, 308b–c on the other.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Lukinovich (1990); Romeri (2000).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. for example Ath. *Deipn.* 2b; 460d; 460f; 670f.

as polymathy provides a stimulation for guests in Athenaeus' work. Aristotle's polymathy appears once again as an essential reference and it constitutes the starting point for asking questions and opening a discussion.<sup>19</sup> In addition, the guests' encyclopaedic knowledge is emphasised by the epitomiser, who mentions their profound knowledge in every field.<sup>20</sup>

The guests in Athenaeus' work wish to remember and assign themselves the goal of learning, as evidenced by the repeated use of the verbs *mimnēskō* and *manthanō* (recall, remember). Often, the effort of recalling or learning ushers in long lists of quotations from several ancient authors;<sup>21</sup> quoting often offers material for competition among the guests, even though friendship and harmony finally predominate. Ulpian, the symposiarch whose exchanges with Cynylcus have a programmatic function, utters a phrase that demonstrates that memory is an important pastime at the symposium and that it is part of competition testing between banqueters: when he clarifies the past and the current meaning of the word *propoma* ("drink taken before meals"), he finishes his statement by saying that he rewards himself for the readiness of his memory ("expressing great satisfaction in his ready memory", 2.58c).<sup>22</sup> So, Athenaeus' banquet, just like Plutarch's, is characterised by the guest's love of learning, remembrance and comments on the convivial experience.

### 3      Macrobius as Reader of Plutarch's Work: Transmitting an Intellectual Heritage

Plutarch's *Table talk* works as a paradigm for Macrobius' *Saturnalia* too, a text written probably in 430 AD. Macrobius stages a long discussion that might have lasted more than three days and which most probably has taken place at banquets organised during the festival of *Saturnalia* in Rome.<sup>23</sup> The narrator structures his work by reproducing the succession of days and by focusing on

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. for example *Deipn.* 126b, 692a. Aristotle's name is mentioned about 170 times.

<sup>20</sup> Ath. 1c–f.

<sup>21</sup> On the way Athenaeus reorganises and reshapes the bibliographical references and the literary material into a new book, see Jacob (2000).

<sup>22</sup> On this statement, see Wilkins (2000: 25). On competing and testing of memory, see also *Deipn.* 107b; 108a ff.; 126b; 669b; 701b.

<sup>23</sup> On the date of the *Saturnalia* and on its relation to religious controversies, cf. Goldlust (2010: 11–19); König (2011: 201–202).

specific moments within each day: mornings are full of serious discussions, whereas afternoons are rather devoted to pleasant discussions.<sup>24</sup>

Twelve guests, Romans, Greeks and Egyptians, took part in these erudite banquets organised by three different hosts. Whether young or old, most of these guests were members of the intellectual Greek and Roman elite. Among these guests, Eustathius appears as the twin figure of Plutarch of Chaeronea, as Christophe Bréchet points out in his convincing hypothesis. According to him, Eustathius reminds us of Plutarch for three reasons: he lived in Rome as a scholar, he was a philosopher and was a good connoisseur of Homer.<sup>25</sup>

Quotation is a dynamic principle in Macrobius' writing. Besides that, many Roman and Greek authors are abundantly quoted in the text and thus brought to light as in Plutarch and Athenaeus. The narrator explains in the preface that he makes use of ancient literary and scientific production in the same style as the ancient authors did, and distinguishes between what ought to be rendered in his "own words" and what requires a "faithful record" (*Pref.* 4).<sup>26</sup> He explicitly presents himself as a guardian of the literary and philosophical heritage which he is willing to transmit:

The work before you promises not a display of eloquence but an accumulation of things worth knowing. You should, furthermore, count it as a bonus if you sometimes gain acquaintance with antiquity plainly in my own words, at other times through the faithful record of the ancients' own words, as each item lends itself to being cited or transcribed.

*Pref.* 4

Macrobius selects, reinvests and reshapes his sources according to his own educational and artistic project. Sometimes he quotes verbatim certain passages from the *Table talk*, mostly in Book 7. The first discussion of the *Saturnalia*, which deals with the appropriate time and suitable subjects for philosophy at table, appears as a rewriting of the *Table talk*'s first conversation. Many other topics attest to the way Plutarch's *Table talk* influenced Macrobius, such as jokes, effects of simple or various foods on digestion, the hot and cold nature

<sup>24</sup> On the way serious conversations are mixed with more relaxed ones, cf. Flamant (1968: 312–315); Goldlust (2010: 92–93).

<sup>25</sup> Bréchet (2009: 186). On the rewriting of Plutarch's *Table talk* in the *Saturnalia*, see König (2011: 215–226). On the guests' profile, see Goldlust (2010: 215–235). Other Plutarchan or pseudo-Plutarchan texts, such as *De audiendis poetis* and *De liberis educandis* respectively, had an impact on the *Saturnalia*. On this influence, see Bréchet (2009: 179, n. 2); Flamant (1977: 172, n. 4); Goldlust (2010: 71–72).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Flamant (1977: 173).

of wine or of women.<sup>27</sup> Like Plutarch, Macrobius shows a particular interest in medical and scientific topics.

Plutarch's influence is perceptible not only in the use of some topics or of the questions and answers but also in the common goals in Plutarch's and Macrobius' works as well as in the organisational principles that rule banquets, such as variety and harmony. In the preface to the *Saturnalia* the narrator claims that he has built up a kind of body made of "various topics, taken from different sources and from various periods" and, like a bee, he put in order a kind of mixture of them (*Pref.* 3). The conversation topics reflect this variety: questions of grammar, etymology, rhetoric, mathematics, music, astronomy, geography, cults, festivals and pontifical laws, physiology, medicine, food and wine are at the centre of the guests' attention. Nevertheless, the poetry of Virgil and his knowledge, whose originality and universality were admired, are a central topic. Like Plutarch and Athenaeus, Macrobius shows an amazing concern for encyclopaedic knowledge and his work is part of the literary miscellanistic tradition.<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, Macrobius tries to bring to light the memory of convivial practices and of certain speeches, just as Plutarch does. In the preface to the *Saturnalia*, in fact, the author explains that he has put together in an artistic work memorable speech as well as actions worthy of memory (*Pref.* 2–3). For Symmachus, one of the guests, reminiscence is a collective experience that makes verbal interactions at the banquet possible (2.1.15). At the same time, Macrobius mentions the pedagogical goal of his text. He explicitly says that he wants to educate Eustathius, his son, to whom he dedicates his practical encyclopaedia called a "blend of knowledge" (*Pref.* 4). Eustathius may use it when he will need to remember (*Pref.* 2: "to call to mind some memorable deed or saying"). This concern for educating, learning and remembering is also personified in Avienus, an adolescent who is curious, willing to learn and constantly asks questions.

In conclusion, Plutarch's reception in Athenaeus' and Macrobius' works has to be assessed on the basis of certain thematic and structural issues, in the common principles of harmony and conviviality as well as in the common goals for knowledge, memory and transmission of the cultural and literary heritage. What is certain is that in all Plutarch, Athenaeus and Macrobius,

<sup>27</sup> On Macrobius' borrowings from Plutarch, cf. Flamant (1977: 180–182); Frateantonio (2007: 367–368); Bréchet (2009: 180–182).

<sup>28</sup> On Macrobius' encyclopaedism, see Guittard (1997). The diversity and multiplicity of knowledge that Macrobius displays echoes the diversity and harmony of nature that he takes as his model. Cf. Goldlust (2010: 145–152).

the large amount of knowledge the banqueters assemble, share and transmit in a friendly way through the dynamic process of questions and answers enables them to define their identity and social status as members of the intellectual elite.

#### 4 Exploring Culinary Metaphors

Conversation (*logos*) compared to food, *logos* and book (*biblos*) as a meal, literary work (*opus*) as a cupboard full of culinary supplies: these three images appear in Plutarch's, Athenaeus' and Macrobius' works respectively. They form a group inside of which the three texts meet, as though Athenaeus and Macrobius were responding to Plutarch whilst enriching the metaphorical style adopted by the latter to speak of one of the pillars of the symposium, namely, conversation, and of the literary work that came from it.

It is at the start of the eighth book of the *Table talk* (716D–717A) that the narrator mentions the harmful consequences related to the exclusion of philosophy from the banquet. Along these lines, he uses some terms which are borrowed from the culinary tradition and from physiology, as if to signal a relationship of interdependence between the *logos* occurring at the wrong time (*akairōs*), and unhealthy food and drink:<sup>29</sup>

Still, one who permits conversation (*logon*) in a drinking-party, but makes no move to see that the conversation is orderly and profitable, is much more ridiculous than the man who approves of serving wine and dessert at dinner, but pours the wine unmixed and sets on food unseasoned and uncleansed. For no drink or food is so disagreeable or unwholesome (*blaberon*), for lack of the right treatment (*mē therapeuthen*), as is conversation (*logos*) that drifts about randomly (*akairōs*) and foolishly (*anoētōs*) at a party.

*Table talk* 716E–F

The narrator compares here the effects of misplaced speech to the dangerous effects of harmful food and drink. Such terms as “lack of the right treatment”, “useful” and “harmful” invest the comparison with medical connotations. Foolish *logos* spoken at an inappropriate time is “digested” with great difficulty and may undermine the stability of the banquet, as if it were causing health issues to the guests. Elsewhere in the text (613C), a similar metaphor is used

<sup>29</sup> On this passage, cf. Romeri (2002: 177–182); Vamvouri Ruffy (2011: 142–144).

when introducing the questions and inquiries at the banquet as though they were food and drinks going down one's throat that could potentially, if pedantic, cause the unlearned guests to suffocate (*hina mē pnigōsi*).<sup>30</sup>

The narrator conceives of his recollection and writing as an extension of Plato's approach.<sup>31</sup> In 686B–D when mentioning Callias' banquet, he points out that the research and the philosophical discussions remain topics of delight for those who remember them, and "also provide just as good a feast on the same food to those who (*ouch hētton hestian parechousi tois autois*), having been left out, partake of them through oral report" (686C). He then goes on by claiming that "it is even today open to men of literary taste to enjoy and share in the Socratic banquets as much as the original diners did" (686C: *hōsper ... tois tote deipnousi*). By using the terms *hestian* and *tois deipnousi* he grants his words a figurative value, thus signifying that the reader is being transformed, thanks to his readings, into a guest who benefits from the transcribed *logos* in both his body and soul. Therefore readers and guests enjoy the banquet, whether they are in the convivial space of the symposia or they read the book reviving the latter. The *Table talk* devotes very little consideration to the meals served during the banquet;<sup>32</sup> what matters most in the work are the discussions. Hence, it is not surprising that the discussions are depicted as food destined for the guests.

What about Athenaeus? Already in the first few paragraphs of the *Deipnosophistae*, the epitomiser uses a culinary metaphor to speak of *logos* at the banquet. It is in the eloquent and rare term of *logodeipnon* ("feast of words") that the domains of both food and conversation at the banquet are juxtaposed:

In short, the plan of the discourse (*hē tou logou oikonomia*) reflects (*mimēma*) the rich bounty of a feast; and the arrangement of the book the courses of the dinner. Such is the delightful feast of words<sup>33</sup> (*logodeipnon*) which this wonderful steward (*oikonomos*), Athenaeus, introduces, and then, surpassing even himself, like the Athenian orators, he is so carried away by the ardour of his eloquence that he passes on by leaps (*bathmēdon*) and bounds to the further portions of his book.

1.1b–c

<sup>30</sup> On this passage, see Vamvouri Ruffy (2012: 67–69).

<sup>31</sup> On memory in Plutarch, cf. Bréchet (2007b).

<sup>32</sup> On the culinary silence in Plutarch's text, see Romeri (2000: 270–271); (2002: 119–125).

<sup>33</sup> I translate the word *logodeipnon* as feast of "words" and not "feast of reason", as Gulick does.

In Athenaeus' text, the speeches follow the succession of the dishes, which are brought according to a specific order. The term *bathmēdon* is used to point out exactly this fact. This link between the dish served and the *logos* commenting on it is a mimetic one (*mimēma*) insofar as the profusion of *logoi*, of quotations, and of comments imitate the profusion of the dishes at the *deipnon*.<sup>34</sup> The metaphor goes even further: similarly to Plutarch's example, the work itself is presented as a banquet since its author is considered to be the steward, a title specific to the running of a kitchen and a home. Thus, writing is associated with the organisation of a meal. Similarly, the metaphor creates an analogy between meal, speech, and literary work.

As for Macrobius, the literary background drawn from Greek and Latin literary works made available to his son is portrayed like a cabinet of literary supplies. Indeed, Macrobius uses an image appertaining to the culinary domain:

I have made a point of reading on your behalf, so that all that I have toiled through – in various books of Greek or Latin, both before and since you were born – might be available to you as a fund of knowledge (*scientiae supellex*). If ever the need arises for a piece of history, say, that lurks hidden from the common run of men in a mass of books, or to call to mind some memorable deed or saying, you will be able to find and produce it easily as though from your own private store of culture (*quasi de quodam litterarum peno*).

*Pref. 2*

Given the presence of this diet-related vocabulary, the literary work seems to resemble a pantry, with the convivial conversations and the knowledge conveyed in them truly being intellectual nourishment. The metaphor is enriched with other images introducing reading and the appropriation of knowledge like a sort of digestion: just as nutrients are transmitted in our strengths and in our blood only if they are transformed (*at cum ex eo quod erant mutata sunt, tum demum in uires et sanguinem transeunt*) the same is true about feeding our intelligence with nutrients that will be subjected to digestion (*in quandam digeriem concoquantur*). The narrator urges not to let the nutrients of the mind be intact and heterogenous, but to digest them as one substance (*in quandam digeriem concoquantur*). Moreover, in order to refer to the task of arranging and classifying his varied material, the narrator uses terms with double meanings, such as the words *indigeste* or *digerente*, used in Latin to speak both of

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<sup>34</sup> In Athenaeus bodily pleasure at dinner is associated with the intellectual pleasure the guests enjoy through wise discussion. Cf. Romeri (2000: 260–262).

setting something in order and of digestion.<sup>35</sup> The metaphor of the pantry (*ponus*) and the comparison between digestion and the method used so as to feed the intelligence respectively draw their inspiration, almost word for word, from the *Attic nights* by Aulus Gellius and from the *Moral letters to Lucilius* by Seneca.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, it is the domains of food, cooking, and physiology of the body that allow Plutarch, Athenaeus, and Macrobius to make tangible their writing project, as well as the representation of the banquets and collection of knowledge.

## 5      Helen's Timeliness and Therapeutic Tale against Sadness at the Banquet

The second key example of reception and re-elaboration of Plutarchean topics in Athenaeus and Macrobius is the narration of Helen's tale in Menelaus' banquet in the *Odyssey* which is reproduced in the *Table talk*. Plutarch's text assimilates the Homeric source, but focuses on the healing power of Helen's speech that provided a pleasant and friendly atmosphere at the banquet. The reception of this episode is particularly illuminating, because it helps us to comprehend what harmony at a banquet means according to Plutarch, Athenaeus, and Macrobius.

In the discussion of the role of philosophy at the symposium, the narrator refers to the fourth book of the *Odyssey* (l. 220–264) and particularly to the therapeutic virtues of the tale as narrated by Helen during the wedding feast of her daughter at Sparta. In the *Odyssey*, the recollection of the heroes that had died in Troy causes an instant overwhelming among the guests so that they burst into tears. Helen then pours their wine in which she has added a special drug that makes them feel better and soothes their sadness (*nēpentes*), a remedy she has received from Polydamna of Egypt. Subsequently, she narrates a tale (*mythos*) about Odysseus who entered courageously into Troy, disguised as a beggar.

The narrator in the *Table talk* mentions this episode but gives his own interpretation of it (*Quaest. conv.* 614C). According to him, it is not the drug Helen received from the Egyptians that calmed the guests' sadness but the proper tale of Helen (*logos*), "a story with a timeliness appropriate to the experiences and circumstances of the moment" (*logos echōn kairon harmozonta tois*

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35    In Book 7 of *Saturnalia* the guests are particularly interested in digestion.

36    Sen. *Ad Luc.* 84.6–7.

*hypokeimenois pathesi kai pragmasin*). In other words, her *logos* was effective because it observed the *kairos* (“timeliness”).<sup>37</sup> Such an interpretation is not surprising in a work where *kairos* is considered one of the pillars for a successful banquet and of the writing project of the work itself. In the introduction to Book 2, the narrator claims that some discussions are regarded as necessary (*epi chreia*, 629C) in a banquet, and others as “entertaining because they possess an attractive theme more suitable to the moment (*tō kairō*) than a pipe and lyre”.

In several discussions, the guests refer to the importance of the right moment in any entertainment.<sup>38</sup> During the discussion about the role of philosophy at the banquet, the physician Crato maintains that philosophy is an art of living (*technēn peri ton bion*), as it introduces moderation and deployment of the right moment into an entertaining event (*to metron kai ton kairon epipherousan*, 613B). The importance of timeliness in quoting is clearly pointed out at the banquet organised by Ammonius in Athens (736C–737C). The guests are discussing the appropriate (*eukairōs*) or inappropriate moment (*akairōs*) to quote poetic verses. At this banquet a violent quarrel bursts out causing rivalry among the guests. At that moment, Ammonius encourages the poet Eraton to sing a poem, probably in an attempt to defuse the tension. Eraton shows great insight by singing verses 11–12 of Hesiod’s *Works and Days*, where the Archaic poet outlines two forms of struggle. Effectively, by quoting this crucial verse, Eraton subtly reminds the guests that they have been engaged in a hostile quarrel. Ammonius congratulates the singer for being able to sing a poem apt to the circumstances (*epēnesen hōs tō kairō prepontōs harmosamenon*, 736E) and in doing so appeases the sympotic company.

The same episode of Helen’s tale is reproduced and adapted by Macrobius, who incorporates it, as Plutarch, in the discussion on how to practise philosophy at a banquet. The narrator explains that knowing how to adjust a speech to the circumstances (*quam locis et temporibus aptare sermones*) proves to be a kind of wisdom (*sapientiae*) leading to a philosophically-minded attitude. Such an example is precisely that of Helen’s tale, whose well-timed narrative restored the joy in Menelaus’ banquet:

<sup>37</sup> On Helen’s speech, see Dupont-Roc (1976: 35); Bergren (1981); Romeri (2002); Klotz (2007: 658–659); Vamvouri Ruffy (2011: 140–142); Perceau (2012).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. for example, *Plu. Quaest. conv.* 613A, 613C, 614C, 619E, 620E, 621D, 629D, 631C, 633E, 634E, 634F, 654A–C, 657B, 660A, 663E, 665E, 671D, 678A, 671D, 709D, 709F, 712C, 713E, 715B, 717B, 722E, 736E.

For should you look more deeply into the wisdom that lurks in Homer,  
the beguiling element that Helen mixed with the wine (*Od.* 4.221) –  
soothing sorrow and wrath, a means of forgetting all woes –  
was not an herb, nor juice from India, but a timely tale (*narrandi opportunitas*) that made her guest forget his sorrow and turn joyful: she told of Ulysses' glorious deeds in his son's presence (*Od.* 4.271), such things as the mighty man did and endured. By giving an account, then, of his father's glory and specific heroic deeds she cheered his son and so was believed to have mixed a cure for grief in the wine.

7.1.18–19

Macrobius integrates in the *Saturnalia* Plutarch's interpretation of Helen's tale. As in Plutarch so in Macrobius, Helen chose a story appropriate to the occasion and thus she restored the joyful atmosphere at the wedding banquet; her narration was a real cure for Telemachus' sadness. Such integration is not surprising, given the fact that for Macrobius, as for Plutarch, timeliness is a pillar in the banquet. And well-timed speech proves to be effectively very important for the guests, who often use such words as *opportuna*, *opportune*, *peropportune*, *inopportune*. Several times they refer to a particular word introduced at a favourable moment, so as to maintain the calm or to diffuse tumult at the banquet.<sup>39</sup> So, like Plutarch, Macrobius shows a particular interest in the joy and harmony prevailing at a banquet, even though consensus in the *Saturnalia* seems to be more significant than in Plutarch's *Table talk*.<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, seeking the favourable speech is an essential poetic principle, as Rufius Albinus, one of the guests, underlines when he refers to Virgil and to his literary practice of collecting the "blossoms" of earlier poets: "this is one of the benefits of reading, to imitate the things you approve in others and by a timely borrowing (*opportuna deriuatione conuertere*) to turn to your own use the words of others that you most admire".<sup>41</sup> Noticeably, Macrobius himself follows the same process as Virgil.<sup>42</sup> As highlighted by Benjamin Goldlust, in the passage there is a *mise en abîme* of the *imitatio-aemulatio* which Macrobius

<sup>39</sup> Cf. for example 1.6.5; 3.6.1–2; 7.10.3; 12.1; 14.5.1; 5.3.16.

<sup>40</sup> In Macrobius there is less challenge between the guests compared to the *Table talk*. See Kaster (1980: 238–239); König (2011: 218–226). According to Kaster (1980) and (2011: xxxviii–xlv), Macrobius' obsession with harmony goes back to the authoritarian orientation of late antique society. As Flamant (1968: 314) remarks, guests in the *Saturnalia* rarely tease each other.

<sup>41</sup> Macr. *Sat.* 6.1.2.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *Pref.* 4.

also practises; he fits in an appropriate way the sources he incorporates into his work.<sup>43</sup>

That said, the transposition of Helen's speech in the *Saturnalia* undergoes a significant re-elaboration. Indeed, unlike the *Table talk* which refers to the effects of Helen's *logos* upon the guests, the philosopher Eustathius in the *Saturnalia* focuses on the effects of her narration upon Telemachus, as if her target was only the son of Odysseus. Eustathius explains that when Helen referred to the glory of Odysseus, she brought happiness to the soul of Telemachus. Such a focalisation is not surprising, if we think that the narrator dedicates his work to his son and that he accentuates the father-son relationship whenever the occasion is given. In this way, just as Helen in Plutarch suits her account to the circumstances, so in the *Saturnalia* she suits it to Telemachus, and through her Macrobius fits the story to his dedicatee, his son Eustathius.

Helen's tale during the banquet at Sparta is also narrated in Book 5 of the *Deipnosophistae*. The guest Masurius, an iambic poet, describes the Homeric banquets and refers to the *pharmakon* used by Helen.<sup>44</sup>

Naturally they weep; but Helen, being a daughter of Zeus, and having learned many counsels from the wise men of Egypt, puts into the wine a drug which is veritably all-healing, and begins a narrative of her experience with Odysseus while her hand is engaged in spinning, a pursuit which she followed not for pleasure, but because she had formed the habit at home.

5.19of

There is no reference here to timeliness nor to the effects of Helen's speech. As a matter of fact, it is only the remedy she used that calmed and pleased them. In the *Odyssey*, Helen receives the remedy from Polydamna, the wife of the king of Egypt, whereas in the *Table talk* she received it from the Egyptians. In Athenaeus, Helen learned about it from the Egyptian wise men (*para tōn en Aigyptō sophōn memathēkuia*), as seen in the passage above (5.19of), and she is thus depicted as a student attending wisdom lessons. This modification is in tune with the author's broader intention of enhancing learning and wisdom throughout the *Deipnosophistae*.

<sup>43</sup> Goldlust (2010: 76–78).

<sup>44</sup> For Bouvier (2007), the description of the Homeric banquets made by an iambic poet reveals the various points of view Athenaeus wants to stress. For the role of Homer in the deipnosophists' conversations, cf. Bréchet (2007a).

Furthermore, when Masurius insists upon Helen's weaving and attendance, he does it in order to highlight her temperance (*sōphrosynēn*, 5.191c) and he affirms that "the poet does not describe her as a woman interested in luxury and as an apathetic person because of her beauty". This interpretation perfectly fits the moral portayal of Homeric lifestyle and symposia in Athenaeus, who views Homer as the poet who described "moderate banquets" (*ta sōphrona symposia*, 5.182b) and considered temperance (*sōphrosynēn*, 1.8e) as the most appropriate virtue for young people, heroes and kings.<sup>45</sup> In Athenaeus, Homer is described as a writer of symposiastic literature and as a didactic poet who outweighs Plato in the field of convivial description and prescriptions.<sup>46</sup> The frequency of the verb *didaskein* ("to teach") clearly reflects this profile. Homeric symposia are superior as moral models for appropriate and measured conduct and, in this perspective, Homer's poem logically emphasises Helen's wisdom about the right way of behaving at a banquet.

There is no doubt that the diegetic transposition of Helen's tale from the *Odyssey* to the *Table talk* and from the *Table talk* to Athenaeus and Macrobius is made in such a way as to suitably adapt the tale to the specific context of each work. In the *Deipnosophistae* and the *Saturnalia* the episode is reelaborated in order to serve specific narrative and educational aims.

## 6 Conclusion

What conclusions can we draw from the remarks raised so far? Conviviality, harmony, erudition, timeliness, remembrance, love for learning and variety of discussions in the Plutarchan banquet leave traces in Athenaeus and Macrobius. We may say that all of the three authors share the same goal, they aim to create texts that present convivial moments and that are both rich in erudite references and highly educational. Erudite conversations are so important for these authors that they meaningfully use the metaphor of culinary *logos* in their texts, as Plutarch did, and hold *logos* as a metaphor of a dish that the participants to the banquet may share. In light of this, erudition and

45 Cf. Peigney (2013: 42–45). Homeric banquets are very different from Larenensis' lavish banquet. Such a contrast reveals the satirical and ironic stance of Athenaeus. Cf. Heath (2000). According to Romeri (2013), in Athenaeus erudition is the solution to the opposition between luxury and sobriety.

46 Cf. Ath. 186d–e; 191c. On Homer as a didactic poet who defines (*aphorizei*, 186d) what a good banquet is, cf. Bouvier (2007: 312–313 and 315–316). On Homer's superiority over Plato, cf. Romeri (2002: 313–316), (2004: 175–188). According to Trapp (2000), for Athenaeus Plato is not a model but rather a topic.

transmission of knowledge through questions and answers appear to be for the intellectual elite of the first ages of the Roman Empire as important as food for a man. Furthermore, the fact that knowledge is not communicated by a single person but by a community of persons that participate in banquets leads us to understand that erudition is a matter of rejoicing and of a shared heritage.

Finally, we may observe that through *Table talk* Athenaeus and Macrobius forge ties with texts of an earlier tradition that have inspired Plutarch. As we have seen in this chapter, Homer's, Plato's and Aristotle's works have been referred or alluded to in specific passages of the *Table talk* which infuse in turn Athenaeus' and Macrobius' works. This leads us to the conclusion that the reception of a specific erudite author, Plutarch in our case, is a complex process that goes back to other authors, whose works are transmitted by this very author. In this respect, the study of that author's reception is a kind of an "archaeological research" as it brings to light strata of palimpsests that sometimes remain playfully hidden under the text.

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# Plutarch in Gellius and Apuleius

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The Roman imperial authors Aulus Gellius and Apuleius of Madauros (both second century AD) are our most important sources of knowledge on Plutarch's early reception in the Latin-speaking world of the high Roman Empire. Both authors spent a period of philosophical study at Athens, the place where in all likelihood they became acquainted with Plutarch's writings. Plutarch is an important philosophical authority for both men, but their respective level of engagement with his writings and thought differs, conditioned as it is by their professional and intellectual identities on the one hand (Gellius may have been a grammarian; Apuleius was an orator and Platonic philosopher), and the types of works that they produced on the other.

## 1 Aulus Gellius and the *Attic Nights*

Aulus Gellius was born between 125–128 AD, and lived during the reigns of the Roman emperors Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius. His life's work is a miscellanistic compilation entitled *Attic nights*,<sup>1</sup> which comprises 20 books of various lengths. It was probably published around 178 AD,<sup>2</sup> and thus falls in the peak of the so-called Second Sophistic. Indeed, some of the prominent personages that Gellius depicts within his work, especially Favorinus and Herodes Atticus, are emblematic figureheads of this Greek cultural movement, their life and activity memorialised by Philostratus in his *Lives of the sophists*. Even though Gellius' cultural and linguistic context is predominantly Latin, the Second Sophistic's preoccupations with the performance and display of knowledge, pure speech, antiquarianism, and cultural identity play out as major themes in his world as well.<sup>3</sup>

Plutarch is mentioned by name at several places across the *Attic nights'* 20 books. Gellius is acquainted with a very limited range of his works, all of

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1 On the *Attic nights'* title, see Vardi (1993). On the *Attic nights'* links with the imperial tradition of writing miscellanies, see Morgan (2004, 2007b and 2011); Oikonomopoulou (2017).

2 Holford-Strevens (2003: 15–20).

3 See discussion in Stertz (1993); Moreschini (1994); Vessey (1994).

which are *Moralia*-writings. They include principally Plutarch's symptotic miscellany, the *Table talk* (cited 4 times, at *NA* 3.5, 3.6, 4.11 and 17.11), the works *On the control of anger* (*NA* 1.26) and *On curiosity* (*NA* 11.16), and various works in the Plutarchan corpus that are either fragmentary or are considered spurious: from the former group Gellius cites from Plutarch's *Life of Heracles* (*NA* 1.1, fr. 7 Sandbach), the *Commentary on Hesiod* (*NA* 20.8, fr. 102 Sandbach), *On Homer* (*NA* 2.8–2.9, 4.11; the work is also known as *Homeric studies*, see frs. 122–124 Sandbach), and *On the soul* (*NA* 1.3.31, 15.10, frs. 174–175 Sandbach); from the latter, Gellius' preface (*NA* pref. 6) mentions the *Strōmateis*, a miscellanistic work attributed to Plutarch in antiquity.<sup>4</sup>

Gellius' uses of Plutarchan material are yoked to the principal aim of his work to stimulate the minds of his readers with the "desire for independent learning and ... the study of the liberal arts" (*NA* pref. 12).<sup>5</sup> Learning useful facts is a key component of this edificatory programme: Gellius explicitly declares his wish to save his readers from embarrassment at situations where one's erudition is often put to the challenge. (*ibid.*, presumably having social situations such as symposia in mind.)<sup>6</sup> To this end, he mines Plutarch's writings for interesting or curious facts about the natural world<sup>7</sup> or for instructive information on the life of famous philosophers.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps emblematically, Plutarch features in the *Attic nights'* very first chapter (*NA* 1.1), which recounts an anecdote drawn from the *Life of Heracles*: according to the anecdote, the philosopher Pythagoras was able, through a complex process of reasoning and extrapolation, to calculate Heracles' height from the length of the stadium at Pisa. As trivial as its content may superficially look, the anecdote exalts curiosity of mind and love of knowledge, with the mention of Pythagoras' and Plutarch's names associating both attributes with philosophy. In this way, Gellius illustrates for his readers the valuable contribution enquiry can make

<sup>4</sup> See fr. 179 Sandbach. See also the Italian translation of Plutarch's fragments by Volpe Cacciatore (2010).

<sup>5</sup> In the remainder of this chapter, all translations from ancient texts are taken from the Loeb editions.

<sup>6</sup> On the *NA*'s educational programme, see Anderson (1994); Henry (1994); Holford-Strevens (2003: 27–80); Vardi (2004); Morgan (2004); Beall (2004); Heusch (2011: 303–402); Oikonomopoulou (2017).

<sup>7</sup> See esp. *NA* 3.6 (a curious fact about the palm tree, drawn from the *Quaest. conv.* See Holford-Strevens [2004: 249–281]; 15.10, citing Plutarch's *On the soul* about a curious mental disease that befell the women of Miletus; 17.11 (offering a summary of *Quaest. conv.* 7.1, on the nature of the stomach and the windpipe); 20.8 (citing Plutarch's *Commentary on Hesiod* on the onion).

<sup>8</sup> *NA* 4.11.11–13, citing Plutarch's *On Homer* about the Pythagorean way of life.

to one's life, and urges them to adopt the mindset of the philosopher who seeks to gain useful knowledge from all facets of the world.<sup>9</sup>

Moral education is an indispensable part of Gellius' educational agenda,<sup>10</sup> and in this regard Plutarch's extensive corpus of moral writings provides a rich source of admonition. In *Advice on health*, Zeuxippus (the main speaker in the dialogue) discourses against the perils of pleasure by quoting the Academic philosopher Arcesilaus: according to Zeuxippus, Arcesilaus stated that "it makes no difference whether a man practises licentiousness from the front or from the rear", addressing his saying specifically to adulterers and promiscuous people (126A). The saying re-surfaces in *Table talk* 7.5 in the mouth of a character, Lamprias (Plutarch's brother), who quotes it in order to issue caution against degenerate music (705E). Gellius quotes the same saying in *Attic nights* 3.5, acknowledging Plutarch as his source: he translates it in succinct Latin and also invests it with narrative context. In Gellius' version, Arcesilaus addressed his saying to a rich man who loved pleasure but had a reputation for incorruptibility and freedom from debauchery. Gellius adds sensational details (the rich man is described as possessing "affected speech, artfully arranged hair and eyes full of desire and alluring sensuality", *NA* 3.5.2) which serve to draw a vivid portrait of Arcesilaus' targets. This portrait is typical of the *kinaidos* in ancient Greek and Roman literature, but the emphasis on affected speech in particular would have additionally brought to mind a type of behaviour that was specifically associated with the imperial sophists' oratorical displays.<sup>11</sup> In this way, Gellius updates the saying for his imperial Roman readers, who carried as cultural background the traditional Roman aversion to displays of opulence, luxury and effeminacy (all denounced on several occasions within the *Attic nights*),<sup>12</sup> and were familiar with the imperial sophists' (often) extravagant displays of eloquence.

It is not clear whether Gellius drew Arcesilaus' saying from *Advice on health* or the *Table talk*: the latter seems more likely, given that he uses the *Table talk* elsewhere in his work (including in the immediately following chapter, 3.6) but shows no sign of familiarity with the former Plutarchan work. But what is clear is that, when necessary, he takes some liberties with his Plutarchan material and embellishes it so as to adapt it to the moral sensibilities of his Roman readers. By duly acknowledging Plutarch as his source, Gellius enhances the philosophical authority of Arcesilaus' saying and links

<sup>9</sup> On the role of philosophy in the *NA*, see Moreschini (1994); Beall (2004).

<sup>10</sup> See Morgan (2004).

<sup>11</sup> See Gleason (1995: 62–67, 82–158).

<sup>12</sup> On Gellius' Roman cultural programme, see Beall (2004); Keulen (2009: 17–94).

the moral dimension of his own work to a long line of philosophers linked to the legacy of the Platonic Academy (Arcesilaus was an Academic Sceptic, and Plutarch a Middle Platonist).<sup>13</sup>

In *NA* 1.26, Gellius' Platonist teacher at Athens Calenus Taurus (on whom see also Bonazzi in this volume)<sup>14</sup> instructs his pupil Gellius on the topic of whether the wise man can get angry, by citing an anecdote about Plutarch. According to Taurus' story, Plutarch once ordered the flogging of one of his slaves as punishment for an offence; the slave violently protested against the punishment, by accusing his master of violating his own philosophical principles and allowing himself to succumb to anger, against what he advocated in works such as *On the control of anger*; to these accusations Plutarch responded by stressing that he felt and showed no anger on his face; the slave's punishment would therefore continue as planned. The anecdote is in all likelihood fictive, but seems to be inspired by the Plutarchan dialogue *On the control of anger* (459A–E). There, Fundanus (one of the dialogue's two speakers) discusses his relationship to his own slaves as a situation that regularly used to put his self-control to the test (459C ff.): slaves tend to behave like children and commit errors, and masters tend to feel angry at them and punish them harshly. Fundanus' solution was to limit the use of punishment against the slaves of his household, whenever they misbehaved; when punishment could not be avoided, he sought to inflict it at the right moment, in moderation and by allowing his slaves to defend themselves. In Gellius' anecdote (which ignores the dramatic context of *On the control of anger*), then, Plutarch appears to implement his own advice to the letter: he orders his slave to be punished, but allows him to defend himself; even when his slave's provocative and accusatory words test his self-restraint, he does not resort to harsher measures, but engages in dialogue with the slave as the punishment is inflicted. It is not clear whether this anecdote is based on Gellius' first-hand knowledge of *On the control of anger*. But it certainly serves to underscore Plutarch's authoritative status among later imperial Platonists like Taurus (who refers to him as *Plutarchus noster*, "our Plutarch": see Bonazzi in this volume for an interpretation of this phrase); and, in a manner that was suited to Gellius' practically-minded Roman readers, it offers a practical illustration of Plutarch's moral philosophy, presenting it in flesh and blood, as it were.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *NA* 1.3.31, citing a saying of Chilo (one of the seven wise men) about friendship and enmity, drawn from Plutarch's *On the soul*; 2.8–2.9, citing Plutarch's criticism of a syllogism of Epicurus, drawn from Plutarch's *On Homer*.

<sup>14</sup> On Taurus' portrait in the *NA*, see discussion in Lakmann (1995); Roskam (2009).

Plutarch's influence on Gellius was probably much more far-reaching: Plutarch's self-presentation as a philosopher and intellectual provided a model for Gellius' own autobiographical self-presentation. In *NA* 11.16, Gellius is pre-occupied with what on the surface appears to be a linguistic matter, namely, how to render into Latin the Greek title of Plutarch's moral treatise *On curiosity* (*Peri polupragmosunēs*, also translated as *On being a busybody* in English), in order to describe its subject matter to a friend of his who knows no Greek. It quickly emerges that the Latin term for "busy" (*negotiosus*) does not satisfy as the basis for a Latin translation, as being actively involved in the duties of the household and state was a positive virtue in the Roman moral system.<sup>15</sup> In fact, as Gellius explains to his friend, Plutarch's treatise advises against undertaking many duties in life. Gellius does not reflect on the deeper implications of this apparent clash between Plutarchan moral philosophy and the Roman value system; rather, the emphasis of his autobiographical anecdote falls on his own function as a cultural mediator who undertakes to communicate Plutarch's philosophical thought to his Roman audience. In this way he mirrors Plutarch himself, who sought to "translate" Roman culture and religion to his Greek readers through his works of parallelism (the *Parallel lives*, but also works such as the *Roman and Greek questions*).<sup>16</sup>

Plutarch's oeuvre offers a fascinating glimpse into the structure and activity of the intellectual circles that formed the social and intellectual background to his work and philosophy. Plutarch's friends and acquaintances appear as characters especially vividly in the *Table talk*.<sup>17</sup> In the various sympotic scenes that are contained within this work, Plutarch depicts himself as a symposiast at various phases of his life, surrounded by members of his close family, his teachers and friends.<sup>18</sup> These depictions of intellectuals and their interactions are undoubtedly idealised: drawing on the rich tradition of the philosophical symposium, Plutarch constructs his sympotic scenes as a way of exalting and promoting philosophy (conceived as the practice of formulating and solving enquiries into the causes or origins of various phenomena) as a way of life.<sup>19</sup> But in contrast to his philosophical predecessors, he leaves ample room for his own autobiographical self-presentation in his work: he not only appears as an active participant in it (sometimes in the role of sympotic host), he also functions as a key social and intellectual link between a truly diverse circle of men,

<sup>15</sup> See discussion in Heusch (2011: 306–327).

<sup>16</sup> See Keulen (2009: 193–235).

<sup>17</sup> For a prosopography of Plutarch's friends, see Puech (1992).

<sup>18</sup> See Klotz (2011); König (2011 and 2012: 60–89).

<sup>19</sup> See Roskam (2010); Klotz and Oikonomopoulou (2011: 13–18); Klotz (2011); König (2011); Oikonomopoulou (2011).

which includes Greeks and Romans, philosophers and laypeople, young and old, specialists and dilettantes.<sup>20</sup> The men meet at various places in Greece and Rome<sup>21</sup> and discourse as equals regardless of differences in status, authority or age. The importance of equality is underscored especially in scenes where authority figures such as Plutarch's Platonist teacher Ammonius<sup>22</sup> engage in dialogue with younger members of the group: the narrative makes a point of stressing that the young men who participate in the conversations are encouraged by the more experienced men to articulate philosophical arguments in support of or against those of their fellow-sympoziasts.<sup>23</sup>

We can surmise the presence of Plutarchan influence in Gellius' own presentation of his intellectual circles. The intellectual communities that feature within the *Attic nights* are of two main types. In the first instance, they comprise a group of individuals who revolve around a prominent figurehead, usually a respected teacher or a prestigious intellectual. Such men are Sulpicius Apollinaris, a respected grammarian who was one of Gellius' teachers, Gellius' philosophical teacher at Athens Calvenus Taurus,<sup>24</sup> his legal teacher Titus Castricius, the jurist Marcus Cornelius Fronto and prominent sophists like Favorinus and Herodes Atticus.<sup>25</sup> The groups that are associated with these men vary in terms of their composition and internal dynamic: they may include groups of students in contexts of formal instruction, or social groups of (presumably) a more heterogeneous nature, whose members are linked to one another through their shared valorisation of true erudition. Symposia are key occasions that provide opportunities for such men to meet and share knowledge, and Gellius offers a good number of narrative scenes which purportedly took place at sympotic occasions. Some give centre stage to his teacher Calvenus Taurus: in one such scene (*NA* 19.6), Taurus reads from Aristotle's *Problems*, together with Gellius and other students of his; the reading offers opportunity for philosophical discussion, and appears to be integrated into Taurus' philosophical teaching.<sup>26</sup> Other sympotic scenes take place at luxury villas or the private homes of prominent men in Greece or Italy, and offer opportunities for

<sup>20</sup> See Klotz (2011); König (2011 and 2012: 64–81); Hobden (2013: 228–234); Andurand (2015).

<sup>21</sup> On the geographical locations that feature in the *Quaest. conv.* in connection to its pan-hellenism, see König (2007 and 2012: 64–89).

<sup>22</sup> On Ammonius, see Jones (1967).

<sup>23</sup> See Roskam (2004); König (2012: 66–71); Oikonomopoulou (2011: 120–123).

<sup>24</sup> On Taurus and his philosophy, see Moreschini (1994); Lakmann (1995); Roskam (2009); Heusch (2011: 257–260).

<sup>25</sup> On these men, see Stertz (1994); Moreschini (1994); Beall (2001); Holford-Strevens (2003: 84–154); Keulen (2009: 155–189; 269–312); Heusch (2011: 251–301).

<sup>26</sup> See Roskam (2009); Oikonomopoulou (2013: 133–138); Meeusen (2018).

intellectual discussion on various topics.<sup>27</sup> The atmosphere is not always harmonious: often in Gellius' symposia and other social occasions provide opportunity for erudite men to expose the ignorance of pseudo-intellectuals, either pretentious philosophers or (most commonly) grammarians.<sup>28</sup> But overall, the diversity of intellectual interests pursued by Gellius' friends (including grammar, language, literature, science, philosophy and history) mirrors that of the *Table talk* and casts Gellius and his friends in the mould of Plutarch.<sup>29</sup>

The second type of intellectual community that Gellius describes consists of peers, who gather together on social occasions or in public contexts in order to practise their shared intellectual pursuits. As a rule, Gellius does not name these friends, but he sometimes describes them in terms of their professions, intellectual interests or literary output. All appear to be active members of Rome's intellectual scene, visiting libraries, producing written output like Gellius himself (he mentions a friend of his who also wrote a miscellany in *NA* 14.6), or engaging in lively debates on scholarly questions. A case in point is *Attic nights* 18.2.1–5:

We used to spend the Saturnalia at Athens very merrily yet temperately, not “relaxing our minds”, as the saying is – for, as Musonius asserts, to relax the mind is like losing it – but diverting our minds a little and relieving them by the delights of pleasant and improving conversation. Accordingly, a number of us Romans who had come to Greece, and who attended the same lectures and devoted ourselves to the same teachers, met at the same dinner-table. Then the one who was giving the entertainment in his turn, offered as a prize for solving a problem the work of some old Greek or Roman writer and a crown woven from laurel, and put to us as many questions as there were guests present.

In this passage, Gellius appears as a member of a group of Roman students at Athens who celebrate a Roman festival, the Saturnalia.<sup>30</sup> The members of the group appear to entertain themselves by posing and solving intellectual problems, an activity which, as we have already seen elsewhere in the *Attic nights*, takes place under the guidance of their philosophical teacher, Calenus Taurus. The absence of a teacher in this scene, in conjunction with the fact

<sup>27</sup> Keulen (2009: 269–312) discusses such scenes in the villa of Herodes Atticus. See also Johnson (2009 and 2010: 98–136), on the activity of reading embedded in such scenes.

<sup>28</sup> See Keulen (2004). On grammarians in the *NA*, see Vardi (2001). On grammarians in the *Quaest. conv.*, see Horster (2008); Eshleman (2013).

<sup>29</sup> See Roskam (2009); Klotz and Oikonomopoulou (2011b).

<sup>30</sup> On Gellius' studies at Athens, see Holford-Strevens (2003: 15–26); Howley (2014).

that none of Gellius' friends is mentioned by name, serves to stress the element of equality in the Saturnalia celebration (Plutarch himself often includes unnamed friends as characters in the *Table talk's* sympotic conversations). In addition, it puts into relief the role of philosophy as a practice that is valuable beyond the bounds of formal teaching, influencing all aspects of life.

Further parallels are worth noting: Gellius' Platonist teacher Calvenus Taurus is depicted within the *Attic nights* in a manner that is reminiscent of Plutarch's teacher Ammonius in the *Table talk*. Apart from the fact that both men are Platonists, they seem to follow a similar style of interaction with their students. Just as Ammonius appears within the *Table talk* to encourage his philosophical pupils to articulate philosophical arguments,<sup>31</sup> so Calvenus Taurus encourages his own philosophical pupils (Gellius among them) to solve intellectual problems and generously shares his philosophical knowledge with them in the context of symposia.<sup>32</sup> Equally significantly, Plutarch and Gellius shared a close acquaintance with the philosopher and sophist Favorinus of Arelate, and both present Favorinus in a positive light, putting the stress on his philosophical identity (contrary to the parodic portraits of Favorinus as an extravagant and effeminate sophist that we find in Philostratus, Lucian and in physiognomical works).<sup>33</sup> Favorinus appears only once in the *Table talk*, in the context of a symposium that took place at Thermopylae: Plutarch mentions a lecture that he gave (though he does not state its topic) and describes him as a man who "is an enthusiastic admirer of Aristotle on all counts, and considers the Peripatetics the most convincing of the schools" (8.10, 734D–E). We know that the two men were close friends: Plutarch dedicated to Favorinus his treatise *On the first cold*, as well as a (now lost) *Letter on friendship* (Lamprias catalogue 132); and Favorinus wrote a work entitled *Plutarch or On the Academic disposition*. Favorinus' role is much more prominent in the *Attic nights*, as we have already seen: apart from presenting himself as a member of his intellectual circle, Gellius frequently quotes his opinions on philosophical or erudite matters in a manner that indicates respect for his authority<sup>34</sup> and recounts occasions where Favorinus' philosophical learning and intellectual acumen become manifest.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> See esp. *Quaest. conv.* 3.1, 8.3.

<sup>32</sup> See *NA* 1.26, 2.2, 7.10, 17.8, 19.6.

<sup>33</sup> See Gleason (1995: 3–20, 131–158).

<sup>34</sup> See *NA* 1.3.27, 1.15.17, 1.21.4–5, 2.1.3, 2.5, 2.12.5–6, 3.3.6, 3.16.17–19, 5.11.8–14, 9.8.3, 9.13.5, 10.12.9–10, 11.5.5, 19.3.

<sup>35</sup> *NA* 2.22, 2.26, 3.1, 3.19, 4.1, 8.2, 12.1, 13.25, 14.1–2, 16.3, 17.10, 17.12, 17.19, 18.1, 18.7, 20.1. See detailed discussion in Holford-Strevens (1997); Beall (2001); Holford-Strevens (2003: 98–130);

Yet more significantly, the *Table talk* (probably along with other miscellanistic works that Gellius cites, such as Pamphila's *Historical commentaries*<sup>36</sup>) seems to have been a key literary model for the *Attic nights'* distinctive miscellanistic aesthetic. It is notable that the reader of the *Attic nights* does not get a sense of an orderly, chronological progression in the representation of the various circles Gellius was a member of: the text is structured according to the technique of *variatio* (variety), and this means that its chapters offer a very fragmented picture of Gellius' life, instead of arranging different episodes of his life chronologically.<sup>37</sup> This type of presentation is strongly reminiscent of the *Table talk*, where, as Frieda Klotz has discussed, the different sympotic conversations are arranged non-chronologically and in a random order, blurring the impression of distinct chronological phases in Plutarch's life.<sup>38</sup>

It is quite striking that Gellius does not mention Plutarch's *Parallel lives* at any point within the *Attic nights*. His work abounds with biographical anecdotes on all the major Greek and Roman generals and politicians that Plutarch wrote about (including Pericles, Themistocles, Alcibiades), yet it does not appear that the *Parallel lives* was the direct source for any of them. Their sources are almost always Roman, and, when not, they are drawn from other miscellanistic collections or anthologies which are duly acknowledged (such as Pamphila, for example, who is explicitly acknowledged as the source of an anecdote on Alcibiades in *NA* 15.17). The most likely explanation for this is that Gellius' acquaintance with Plutarch's writings was limited, and probably mediated through his philosophical training under his teacher Taurus at Athens. What Gellius does cite from Plutarch's oeuvre is probably the result of careful excerpting – the *commentarii* that, according to his preface, formed the groundwork for the *Attic nights* as we have it, and which he began to compose already as a student at Athens.

## 2 Apuleius of Madauros

Apuleius was a contemporary of Gellius (he too was born around 125 AD). He was born in the north African town of Madauros and studied at Carthage and Athens. His period of study at Athens may have overlapped with Gellius' own,

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Keulen (2009: 155–189). The fragments of Favorinus' works (including miscellanistic writings) can be found in Barigazzi (1966) and Amato (2010).

<sup>36</sup> On Pamphila, see Oikonomopoulou (2017).

<sup>37</sup> On variety as a literary technique in miscellanies, see Morgan (2007: 257–273; 2007b); Fitzgerald (2016: 149–195); Oikonomopoulou (2017).

<sup>38</sup> Klotz (2011).

as some intriguing resemblances between their works that have been pointed out by Leofranc Holford-Strevens suggest.<sup>39</sup> We know little else about his life, except that he pursued a successful career as an orator and Platonic philosopher, giving lectures on various topics at different cities in the Mediterranean (his *Florida* is a collection of extracts from his lectures and speeches).<sup>40</sup> In 158 AD he was sued for magical practices by his wealthy wife's family, and wrote an *Apology* in defence of himself at the trial. Apuleius also wrote three treatises on Platonic philosophy (*On the god of Socrates*, *On Plato and his doctrine*, *On the universe*). But his most well-known and celebrated work is the comic novel *The golden ass*, also known as the *Metamorphoses*. Apuleius' variegated output puts his many identities to the fore: there has been much discussion about whether he should be characterised as a sophist,<sup>41</sup> and about his relationship to Middle Platonism. The Platonic subtext of the *Metamorphoses* has also been the subject of extensive investigation, particularly in light of the fact that the novel contains as an inset tale, the story of Cupid and Psyche, that is interpreted as a Platonic allegory.

The relationship of Apuleius to Plutarch has been much discussed by scholars, especially in light of the fact that both authors were Platonists. The only secure tie between them is found at the beginning of the *Metamorphoses*. There, the narrator Lucius presents himself as a Greek and a self-taught student of Latin. Lucius traces his lineage on his mother's side back to Plutarch (*Met.* 1.2):

I was travelling to Thessaly, where the ancestry of my mother's family brings us fame in the persons of the renowned Plutarch and later his nephew, the philosopher Sextus.

As Luc van der Stockt has suggested, Plutarch and Sextus' names probably serve to invite readers of the *Metamorphoses* to interpret the work as a "Plutarchan novel", and thus to relate it to Plutarch's thought and writings.<sup>42</sup> Yet the fact that Plutarch's name is associated with Thessaly (traditionally, a land of magic), rather than his native Boeotia, may be seen "as a re-shaping and

<sup>39</sup> Holford-Strevens (2003: 22–26). See also Sandy (1997: 27–36); Harrison (2000: 1–14); Keulen (2004) and Howley (2014).

<sup>40</sup> See commentary by Hunink (2001) and Lee (2005). Also the new Loeb translation by Jones (2017).

<sup>41</sup> See Sandy (1997) and Harrison (2000), who consider Apuleius a "Latin sophist".

<sup>42</sup> Van der Stockt (2012: 170); see also his discussion of *Met.* 1.2 in (2012: 169–171). This is also the opinion of Walsh (1981: 22).

reformulating of various Plutarchan ideas and texts into a novelistic context.”<sup>43</sup> At any rate, beyond this reference no prominent allusions to Plutarch’s works can be found within the *Metamorphoses*. Several parallels that have been pointed out by scholars are intriguing, but unfortunately they do not prove a direct Plutarchan influence on Apuleius’ thought. I discuss the most important among them below:

1. The defining feature of Lucius is his curiosity (*curiositas*): although he himself rejects this characterisation, he nevertheless describes himself as someone who has “thirst for novelty” and as “the sort who wants to know everything, or at least most things” (*Met.* 1.2). Hearing stories is what Lucius appears to enjoy the most, and time and again the novel presents him as an avid listener of stories told by others.<sup>44</sup> In the course of the novel, Lucius’ curiosity (particularly for magical practices) is the reason for his loss of human form and many tribulations.<sup>45</sup> In the tale of Cupid and Psyche too (which functions as a *mise-en-abyme* within the *Metamorphoses*), Psyche is characterised as curious: her curiosity leads her to discover the secret identity of her husband Cupid and thus to lose him (*Met.* 5.23); later, in the course of the tribulations she has to undergo in order to be reunited with him, her curiosity gets the better of her once more, when, like Pandora, she opens the jar of divine beauty she has been entrusted with the explicit instruction not to open it (*Met.* 6.19–21).<sup>46</sup> This agrees with how Plutarch describes curiosity in the namesake treatise: “curiosity is really a passion for finding out whatever is hidden and concealed”, as he puts it (518C); busybodies, as he states, crave novelty and are impatient at stale news, constantly seeking to hear new stories about others (518A). Plutarch recommends training and self-control as strategies for overcoming curiosity, citing as examples the lives of various philosophers such as Socrates. In this way, philosophy is promoted as a practice for curing character of this vice. In the fictional world of the *Metamorphoses*, on the other hand, the toils and tribulations of Lucius and Psyche serve as punishment for their curiosity, with redemption coming ultimately from the gods. Though a direct Plutarchan influence on Apuleius’ treatment of curiosity cannot be proved, it

43 Finkelppearl (2012: 199). Hunink (2004: 259) notes that it is in fact Plutarch’s nephew Sextus and not Plutarch himself who is characterised as a philosopher here, and stresses (*ibid.*: 257–260) that the overall jocular context in which the association with Plutarch is offered in *Met.* 1.2.

44 See esp. *Met.* 1.2–4, where Lucius encourages his fellow-travellers to share their stories with him.

45 On the role of magic in the *Met.*, see study by Frangoulidis (2008).

46 See Kenney (1990: 216–217); also Keulen (2007: *ad loc.*).

is certainly possible, given the existence of a Plutarchan treatise on the topic.<sup>47</sup> Still, the question is how seriously it should be taken: given, as we saw above, that Lucius presents himself as a descendant of Plutarch, the narrative leaves open the possibility that his vice is ultimately inherited from his prestigious philosophical relative.<sup>48</sup>

2. The Platonic undertones of the tale of Cupid and Psyche can be put into sharper relief if the tale is read in the light of Plutarch's *Dialogue on love*.<sup>49</sup> There, Plutarch's father discusses Eros' relationship to the soul (764B–765F). He rejects the poets' portraits of Eros as mockeries of his true powers (765D). Invoking Egyptian myth, he likens Eros to the sun and Aphrodite to the moon: just as the sun provides light, nourishment and growth to the body, so Eros warms the souls with his brilliant rays. In fact, Eros' light has an effect that is the opposite of the sun's: the sun's rays lead us to observe the world of the senses, making us believe it is the true one; Eros, by contrast, turns our attention to the intelligible world of Forms: "Divine and chaste Love teaches the soul the truth that leads her to the Plain of Truth, where Beauty, concentrated and pure and genuine, has her home" (765A). Love at first approaches humans through the beauty of the body, thus awakening our memory of pure Beauty. Soon the lover learns to look past the body's beauty, and seek in his lover's character and thoughts the image of ideal beauty (765C). After death, "The true lover, when he has reached the other world and has consorted with true beauty in the holy way, grows wings and joins in the continual celebration of his god's mysteries, ..." (766B).

Cupid's portrait in the *Metamorphoses* is clearly based on the poetic tradition, given that he is described as a winged creature of youthful appearance who carries a torch together with a bow and arrow.<sup>50</sup> But in Apuleius' novellistic universe, this portrait is not incompatible with a Platonist interpretation of the myth. One can detect a Platonic subtext, for example, in the scene where Psyche sees Eros for the first time: the body of sleeping Cupid is described in terms of its brilliance and resplendence, illuminated though it is by Psyche's faint candle light (*Met.* 5.22).<sup>51</sup> The rest of the story can be read as a Platonic allegory: at first, Psyche is bewitched by Cupid's physical beauty, unable to perceive his divinity. Only after she undergoes various toils, which include a trip to Hades, is Psyche ready finally to re-join her husband in the

<sup>47</sup> See Walsh (1981: 24–26).

<sup>48</sup> So Hunink (2004: 259–260).

<sup>49</sup> This is argued by Walsh (1981: 29–30); cf. Hunink (2004: 253).

<sup>50</sup> See Kenney (1990: 169). Cf. the commentary by Zimmerman *et al.* (2004).

<sup>51</sup> See Kenney (1990: 169–171).

divine realm, and recognise him for what he is. She is subsequently granted the gift of immortality and remains united with Cupid in a marriage that lasts forever, living among the other immortal deities.<sup>52</sup> Unfortunately the parallels with Plutarch's *Dialogue on love* do not necessarily imply direct Plutarchan influence on Apuleius, and can be more plausibly explained through the two authors' Platonism.

3. In the final book of the *Metamorphoses* (Book 11), Lucius is redeemed by the Egyptian goddess Isis: he prays to her for his salvation and, after an epiphanic dream in which he has a vision of the goddess, he becomes her initiate. In the end, after undergoing ritual purification during her mysteries, he regains his human form. Scholars have drawn attention to the Plutarchan treatise *On Isis and Osiris* as a possible influence:<sup>53</sup> there, Plutarch recounts to his friend, the priestess Clea, the Egyptian myth of Isis and Osiris, preceded by a philosophical key to its interpretation. As Plutarch advises, the myth, as all Egyptian myths, should not be taken at face value, but interpreted allegorically, in a manner that is compatible with Platonic philosophy. However, the links between Apuleius and this treatise seem tenuous at best: apart from sharing Plutarch's interest in Egyptian mythology and religion, Apuleius describes the Isis cult and nowhere offers an interpretation of the Isis and Osiris myth.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, Isis' association with Venus and the Moon certainly invites philosophical reading (and may indirectly look back to the story of Cupid and Psyche).<sup>55</sup> Plutarch's *Dialogue on love* can once more serve as a useful key to its philosophical interpretation, without necessarily constituting a direct influence.

Last but not least, the similarity of title and theme between Apuleius' treatise *On the god of Socrates* and Plutarch's dialogue *On the sign of Socrates* belies their philosophical differences. Scholarship has conclusively demonstrated that the two authors diverge in important aspects of their thought on the role of demons in the world. It may well be, as it has been argued, that Apuleius' treatise has much more in common with Maximus of Tyre's *Orations* 8 and 9 on the same topic, than with Plutarch's namesake work.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>52</sup> See Edwards (1992). The arguments for reading the tale, as well as the novel as a whole, as a Platonic fiction are summarised by Tilg (2014: 58–83).

<sup>53</sup> Walsh (1981: 23–24).

<sup>54</sup> See detailed discussion of the parallels by Van der Stockt (2012); Finkelpearl (2012). For the egyptological aspects of the Isis book, see the commentary of Gwyn Griffiths (1975); cf. the commentary by Keulen and Egelhahaf-Geiser (2014). See also Tilg (2014: 86–105).

<sup>55</sup> See Zimmerman (2012: 6–7); Drews (2012).

<sup>56</sup> See Hunink (2004: 253–256); Roskam (2010a); Fletcher (2014: 100–172); Benson (2016).

All in all, most of the parallels between Apuleius and Plutarch can be explained through their shared Platonic heritage. By citing Plutarch's name in the preface of the *Metamorphoses*, Apuleius acknowledges Plutarch as an important Platonic forebear, but the two authors appear to have followed independent paths as philosophers and intellectuals. A key sign of this divergence is that nowhere in his non-fictional works does Apuleius present himself as a reader of Plutarch's writings, as Gellius does. However, he may have shared Gellius' special interest in the *Table talk*, given that Sidonius Apollinaris and Macrobius attribute to him a work entitled *Quaestiones convivales (Sympotic questions)*;<sup>57</sup> the title appears to be a Latin parallel to the Greek title of Plutarch's *Table talk* (also translated in English as: *Sympotic problems* or *Sympotic questions*). If so, then we could surmise that Apuleius, like his contemporary Gellius, relied on Plutarch for his own version of the philosophical symposium. Unfortunately no fragments of the work survive, rendering it impossible for us to ascertain whether Plutarch was its model.

### 3 Conclusions

Gellius' and Apuleius' testimony indicates that Plutarch's reputation and authority as (principally) a philosopher extended well beyond the Greek-speaking world of the Roman Empire. Plutarch's name carries different connotations for each author: for Gellius, it serves to affirm the status and usefulness of philosophical enquiry in life, as well as to provide practical ethical guidance for his Roman audience; for Apuleius, Plutarch provides a genealogical link with the tradition of Platonism, and offers a key to interpreting his own distinctive contribution to it as a novelist and philosopher. Most significantly, Plutarch's *Table talk* appears to be the work that had special appeal for both authors. We can perhaps see why, given that it is dedicated to a Roman (Plutarch's friend Sosius Senecio) and its sympotic dialogues feature several Roman characters (including Mestrius Florus, Plutarch's Roman patron) who practise philosophical enquiry on equal terms with Plutarch's Greek guests.

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57 Sidon. *Epist.* 9.13.3; Macr. *Sat.* 7.3.23–24. See Harrison (2000: 30–31); Zimmerman (2008: 152); König (2012: 27, 180). On Macrobius' reception of Plutarch, see Vamvouri Ruffy in this volume.

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# Plutarch's Reception in Imperial Graeco-Roman Philosophy

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When Plutarch died, Donald Russell once remarked, he was a famous man.<sup>1</sup> Several witnesses confirm that he was regarded as a classic, a rare fate for an imperial writer, shared only by his contemporary Dio Chrysostom and the later sophist Aristides. Perhaps the most telling testimony to Plutarch's fame in the second century AD is found at the very beginning of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, where Lucius claims descent from Plutarch's family as a sign of distinction.<sup>2</sup> In a similar fashion, in the fourth century the sophist Himerius, when presenting his son Rufinus to the Areopagus, stressed that he was "a descendant of Plutarch, through whom you educate all men".<sup>3</sup> The reference to education shows that Plutarch was appreciated and remembered not only as a great writer and historian but also as a philosopher. This was already the view of Calenus Taurus, one of the most important Platonists of the second century AD, as we shall see.<sup>4</sup> The attribution to Plutarch of anonymous works such as the treatise *On fate* and *Doctrines of the philosophers* is a further confirmation of his philosophical standing in this age.

But does this fame also reflect a real influence? Was Plutarch seen as a thinker whose views deserved to be seriously taken into account? To measure the real extent of his philosophical influence is more difficult than it may appear at first sight, for several reasons. First of all, as it is well known, ancient writers did not have the habit of quoting their rivals explicitly. Moreover, one should also consider the distinctive features of early Imperial Platonism (otherwise known as Middle Platonism).<sup>5</sup> In the first centuries of the Imperial era there was a renewal of interest for Plato's metaphysics in opposition to the sceptical interpretation of the Hellenistic Academy. In competition with Stoics and Peripatetics, Platonists developed their own positive doctrines on the basis of

<sup>1</sup> Russell (1972: 143).

<sup>2</sup> Apul. *Met.* 1.2. See also Oikonomopoulou in this volume.

<sup>3</sup> *Or.* 7.4. So does also an otherwise unknown Nicagoras in an inscription (*SIG<sup>3</sup> 845*).

<sup>4</sup> Aul. Gell. *NA* 1.26.

<sup>5</sup> For a short introduction, see Bonazzi (2014). The standard discussion is Dillon (1996).

an accurate interpretation of the dialogues, most notably the *Timaeus*. The result was a new metaphysical and theological system based on the theory of three principles (God, that is the *Timaeus'* Demiurge, the Forms, and matter) and on the doctrine of the immateriality and immortality of the soul; in ethics the emphasis was on the exhortation to assimilate oneself to God, while acknowledging that passions are constituent parts of our nature and cannot be completely eradicated (as the Stoics wrongly claimed). In general, all Platonists endorsed these doctrines, differing on specific points (for instance, the eternity of the universe, as we shall see below). This complicates the task of detecting the specific contributions of single thinkers and their eventual influence on others. In spite of this, however, our sources confirm that Plutarch was regarded as a philosopher deserving to be considered, perhaps only in order to be criticised.

## 1 Plutarch, Atticus and Taurus

Atticus and Taurus are the two most interesting cases in that respect. Atticus was one of the most important second-century AD Platonist philosophers, often associated with Plutarch in later Neoplatonist sources.<sup>6</sup> The most important parallel concerns the debate on the eternity of the universe, one of the most hotly contested issues among Platonists during the Imperial era.<sup>7</sup> The problem was philosophical as well as exegetical. Plato was regarded by Platonists as the depository of truth: but what was the correct interpretation of the *Timaeus'* account of the creation of the universe? The text clearly states that the universe was created. Does this mean that Plato was supporting a creationist account? Many Platonists, from the Old Academy (Speusippus, Xenocrates) to late antiquity, denied such a literalist reading of the dialogue by claiming that Plato's language depended on "didactic reason". As a matter of fact, Plato endorsed the view that the universe is eternal, but in order to explain in a clear way the structure of the universe he used a language which might suggest a temporal creation. This was the most popular view. Plutarch and Atticus defended the opposite view,<sup>8</sup> and this is surely a remarkable parallel. But does it suffice to prove that Atticus was influenced by Plutarch? Such a hypothesis

<sup>6</sup> See Opsomer (2001: 187–199) and Petrucci (2016: 97–125), who argues that Neoplatonists were confronting Atticus more than Plutarch. On Atticus, see Dillon (1996: 247–257); for the edition of the fragments, Des Places (1977).

<sup>7</sup> Baltes (1976).

<sup>8</sup> Plu. *De an. procr.* 1013D–1017C; *Quaest. plat.* 1002E–1003B, 1007D, Lamprias cat. no 66 (*On the fact that in Plato's view the universe had a beginning*); Attic. fr. 4, des Places.

cannot be excluded, but it must also be underlined that there is no explicit testimony pointing to a Plutarchan influence, and other possibilities cannot be excluded either. While Plutarch was as a rule opposed to Stoicism, Atticus appears as a philosopher most interested in exploiting certain Stoic doctrines in his Platonist system. It is therefore possible that his creationist interpretation of the universe was also influenced by the Stoics, who already stressed the connection between the creation of the universe and God's providence.<sup>9</sup> The testimonies are scanty and we ought to be cautious.

In the period between Plutarch and Atticus, the most renowned Platonist teacher in Athens was Calvenus Taurus (around 105–165 AD).<sup>10</sup> Aulus Gellius studied under him and provides us with some important information on his teaching activity and doctrine. In 1.26 Aulus Gellius presents Taurus as telling an anecdote about Plutarch, in the course of which he refers to him as *Plutarchus noster* ("our Plutarch"). The adjective *noster* clearly implies some acquaintance with Plutarch on Taurus' part. But what kind of acquaintance? Unfortunately, in this case too it is difficult to be precise. First of all, there is a chronological problem. Plutarch died around 120 AD; the most reasonable hypothesis is that Taurus was born around 105 AD. This makes it obviously possible that the two were acquainted,<sup>11</sup> but makes the hypothesis that Taurus was a pupil of Plutarch very difficult.<sup>12</sup> In order to defend such a possibility, Dillon proposed to extend Plutarch's life-span to 125 AD and push Taurus' birth-date back to at least 100 AD.<sup>13</sup> But it should also be noted that elsewhere Taurus refers to Plato as well as *Plato noster*.<sup>14</sup> It is therefore equally possible that, when referring to *Plutarchus noster*, Taurus was putting emphasis on doctrinal and philosophical affinity. Such a possibility would confirm that Plutarch was regarded as an important philosophical authority in Athens.

Important as it is, Aulus Gellius' testimony is not particularly rich in information about Taurus' philosophical views. One issue that is at stake in his portraiture is anger, a typical problem of practical ethics in the Roman world: will the wise man get angry? Before explaining his views on the problem, Taurus mentions an anecdote about Plutarch:<sup>15</sup> he asked a slave to be beaten and the slave reproached him that this contradicted what Plutarch himself so many

<sup>9</sup> See Bonazzi (2017).

<sup>10</sup> For a short and clear introduction to Taurus, see Lakmann (2016: 713–722) and especially Petrucci (2018); the fragments are edited by Gioè (2002: 221–376).

<sup>11</sup> Holford-Strevens (1988: 209, n. 82).

<sup>12</sup> Lakmann (1995: 227–228), Gioè (2002: 289).

<sup>13</sup> Dillon (1996: 237).

<sup>14</sup> Aul. Gell. 7.13.10.

<sup>15</sup> Aul. Gell. 1.26.

times taught and wrote, namely, that the wise man must not yield to anger. But Plutarch replied *lente et leniter* ("calmly and mildly"), as he was perfectly in control of himself when he gave his order. Gellius explicitly refers to the *On the control of anger* which is labelled as "most beautiful" (*pulcherrimum*, says the slave). Interestingly, in this treatise Plutarch says that how a master deals with his slave is an indication of whether he is able to control his anger or not. A certain amount of anger is beneficial, provided that one avoids any excess. This is the typical position of Platonists (and Peripatetics) in favour of *metriopatheaia* (moderation of passions), as opposed to Stoic *apatheia* (absence of passions), which Taurus also endorses. Gellius therefore confirms the popularity of Plutarch's treatise. But this doctrine was so typical and widespread that one must not put too much emphasis on the reference to this treatise on Gellius' part.

Another aspect of the anecdote is perhaps more interesting. Anecdotes about philosophers dealing with slaves were popular, and often associated with Platonists,<sup>16</sup> probably in consequence of their doctrine about the moderation of the passions. As in the case of Plutarch, how the philosopher behaved towards the slave was regarded as proof of the coherence between his doctrine and his life. This gives us a revealing glimpse of Plutarch's fame. Indeed, it may be remarked that the anecdote not only lays emphasis on Plutarch's quiet and controlled behaviour, it also presents him as an accomplished philosopher, whose doctrine and life were in perfect harmony. Once again, this suggests that Plutarch was regarded as a philosophical model, at least in Athens. We do not know much about the reception of his doctrines but this aspect at least is quite clear.<sup>17</sup>

## 2 The Polemics between Favorinus and Epictetus, and Numenius' Attack against the Hellenistic Academy: a Source for Plutarch?

All in all, it is difficult to trace the influence of Plutarch's doctrines among early Imperial Platonists. But there is another issue which deserves closer scrutiny.

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<sup>16</sup> See for instance Speusippus, fr. 6, Isnardi Parente; or Xenocrates, fr. 10, Isnardi Parente. As for Plato, see Swift Riginos (1976: 155); see also SVF 1.298.

<sup>17</sup> As for the doctrines, it might be suggested that the polemical reference to those who endorse the view of the temporal creation of the universe is Plutarch (fr. 23, Gioè), who was by far the most famous supporter of this view at that time in Athens. Once again, like in the case of Atticus, this would show that admiration and respect of an important predecessor did not mean passive acceptance of his doctrines. I thank Federico Petrucci for suggesting this hypothesis.

One of the most pressing concerns for Platonists was to define their Platonic identity. What did it mean to be a Platonist for a philosopher of the first Imperial centuries? The problem was complicated by the fact that several interpretations of Plato were circulating in this period. There was the Stoic Plato of Panaetius and Posidonius, for instance, and the Pythagorean Plato of the pseudo-pythagorean treatises. And, above all, there was the sceptical Plato of the Hellenistic Academy.<sup>18</sup> Platonists could and did certainly react against the Stoic and Pythagorean appropriations. But what about the Academy, which was the school founded by Plato? On this topic there was a huge debate, “a great discord” (*pollē stasis*), as Diogenes Laertius wrote.<sup>19</sup> The majority of Platonists from Antiochus to late Neoplatonists adopted the view that scepticism was incompatible with genuine Platonism.<sup>20</sup> Plutarch developed a different view and tried to integrate the Hellenistic Academy into the tradition of Platonism, as the treatise *On the unity of the Academy since the time of Plato* (Lamprias Cat. no. 63, now lost) indicates.<sup>21</sup> This is a very sensible point which can provide us with some information on how Plutarch was received by other Platonists.

From what we know only two other philosophers followed a similar path and took Academic scepticism into serious consideration. The first is the author of a systematic commentary on Plato's *Theaetetus* found in Egypt in 1905.<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately nothing is known about the author of this text, who was clearly a Platonist teacher. But it is uncontroversial that he belongs to the early Imperial age like Plutarch.<sup>23</sup> Remarkably, he endorses more or less the same interpretation as Plutarch does.<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately any attempt to prove either that he was influenced by or that he influenced Plutarch would incur the charge of being too speculative. Neither can we preclude the possibility that Plutarch and this anonymous professor were not aware of each other. In his case, then, we can only register the convergence with Plutarch.

The second case is much more telling. It concerns Favorinus (around 80–160 AD), one of the most prolific and important writers of the early Imperial period. Favorinus was, for some time at least, Plutarch's pupil, and

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Cic. *Ac.* I 45, *Luc.* 74; Plu. *Adv. Col.* 1121F–1122a; Sext. Emp. *PH* 1.221–223; Anon. *Prol. in Plat. phil.* 10.4–7.

<sup>19</sup> D.L. III 51.

<sup>20</sup> I reconstruct this debate in Bonazzi (2003).

<sup>21</sup> See Donini (2003) and Bonazzi (2012) for a reconstruction of the content of this treatise and for an account of Plutarch's interpretation with further bibliography.

<sup>22</sup> For the edition of the text, see Bastianini and Sedley (1995).

<sup>23</sup> In favour of this date, see Opsomer (1998: 34–69) and Brittan (2001: 249–254).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. 54.38–55.13 and 70.5–26. See Bonazzi (2013: 309–333) and Brittan (2001: 225–240), who detects some differences between the two thinkers.

shares many common features with his teacher to the effect that he has been described as *Plutarchi aemulus*, an imitator of Plutarch.<sup>25</sup> Philosophically, they both share an interest in Academic scepticism, even though their views do not perfectly fit. Like the anonymous commentator, Plutarch argued for a Platonist interpretation of the Hellenistic Academy, in the sense that he tried to present Academic scepticism as compatible with Platonist metaphysical dualism. Unlike these two thinkers, Favorinus appears to be endorsing the Hellenistic Academy's original version of scepticism, with no traces of the new metaphysical Platonism of the first Imperial centuries.

It is not therefore by chance that Plutarch dedicated his most overtly "sceptical" treatise, the *On the first cold*, precisely to Favorinus.<sup>26</sup> The surviving evidence does not enable us to reconstruct Favorinus' sceptical philosophy in detail.<sup>27</sup> But it is a reasonable assumption that his renewal of the Academic scepticism was part of his association with Plutarch. Moreover, as we will later see, the testimony of Favorinus enables us to perceive that Plutarch's Academic interest received attention from other important philosophers. If this is so, it is a clear confirmation of his popularity during the early Imperial period.

A lover of polemics, Favorinus was himself the object of many polemics. In particular, he was severely attacked by Galen, who in the *On the best doctrine* charged him for defending an absurd version of scepticism.<sup>28</sup> In the course of his polemics Galen provides us with some interesting details concerning Plutarch as well. More specifically, Galen reports that he derives his information from three treatises of Favorinus, *On the cataleptic impressions*, *Against Epictetus* and *On the Academic disposition*, also called *Plutarch*. These three texts, now lost, are very revealing when considered together, in that they also introduce one of the most important Stoics of the time, Epictetus. Favorinus' defense of the Academy also involved an attack on Stoicism, and more precisely on Epictetus. That the "Academic" Favorinus attacked Stoicism and Epictetus is by itself unsurprising. But what is remarkable is that the polemics against him draw Plutarch into the discussion. From Galen we learn that in the treatise *Against Epictetus* the interlocutor of Epictetus was one of Plutarch's slaves. This choice, in itself very polemical, confirms that Favorinus regarded and presented Plutarch as an heir of the great tradition of the Hellenistic Academy: that a slave of Plutarch suffices to confute Epictetus (who was himself a slave)

<sup>25</sup> Glucker (1978: 283–284).

<sup>26</sup> *De prim. frig.* 955A.

<sup>27</sup> See Ioppolo (1993: 183–213).

<sup>28</sup> See Opsomer (1998: 221–229) for a balanced account of Galen's polemics.

is indeed part of a very violent attack,<sup>29</sup> but it also suggests that Plutarch was regarded by Favorinus as an important part of the Academic tradition, as also confirmed by the title of his other treatise, *On the Academic disposition or On Plutarch*.

If this is so, a new intriguing hypothesis comes to the fore. One may observe that if Favorinus wants to defend Plutarch during his polemics against Epictetus, this is because Epictetus himself had attacked Plutarch. As a matter of fact, Epictetus' *Discourses* contains several passages directed against the Academics, without further indication, as it was typical at that time.<sup>30</sup> Early Imperial philosophers seldom named their colleagues or adversaries. But in some of these passages at least the identikit of the unnamed Academic is strongly reminiscent of Plutarch. The most remarkable text is the polemical reference to Academic priests who consult the Pythias.<sup>31</sup> As many scholars have already remarked, this is an eloquent description that points to Plutarch, who defined himself as an Academic and was a priest at Delphi.<sup>32</sup> To be sure, this is only an hypothesis. But it is a very reasonable hypothesis, which would further confirm that Plutarch was very well known in the early Imperial centuries.

There is an additional and quite remarkable testimony about the Hellenistic Academy, which may provide us with some further information. The most important Platonist of the second century AD was Numenius of Apamea, who endorsed a pythagoreanising interpretation of Plato.<sup>33</sup> Numenius is very close to Plotinus and to the development of a new version of Platonism, which we nowadays call Neoplatonism.<sup>34</sup> The two works of Numenius we are best informed about are a text entitled *On the good* (frgs. 1–22, Des Places) and a polemical pamphlet entitled *On the unfaithfulness of the Academics to Plato* (frgs. 24–28, Des Places). If the first text, dealing with Plato's metaphysical principles, is what we would expect from a Platonist such as Numenius, the latter work deserves some more attention. In it we find an attack on the entire tradition stemming from Plato, Xenocrates and Aristotle (fr. 24, Des

29 It is interesting to remark that Epictetus had mockingly expressed the wish to become an Academic's slave in order to carry out his master's order in a "perverse" way in consequence of his scepticism (*Diss.* 2.20.29–31); see Opsomer (1998: 234), who further speculates on a possible connection with the above discussed text of Aulus Gellius, where another slave is introduced.

30 See Epict. *Diss.* 1.27.18–9 and the entire discourses 1.5 and 2.20.

31 Epict. *Diss.* 2.20.27.

32 So, among others, Cuvigny (1969: 563–564) and Opsomer (1998: 233) with further bibliography.

33 See Dillon (1996: 361–379) for a short presentation of his life and doctrine, and Frede (1987: 1034–1075) for a more careful interpretation.

34 Plotinus was accused of plagiarising Numenius, see Porphy. *Vita Plot.* 17.1–6 and 18.1–6.

Places) to, and especially, the Hellenistic Academics (frgs. 25–28, Des Places). This text can appear surprising only at first sight, because, as it is now agreed by many scholars, the history of philosophy played an important part in philosophical debates of the early Imperial centuries.<sup>35</sup> These historical reconstructions were not so much a display of erudition as an important tool for defining the tradition one claimed to belong to. Numenius' pamphlet fits into this context very well: when insisting on the distance between Plato and Pythagoras on the one hand and Xenocrates and Aristotle on the other, he was reacting against what was the most common strategy among early Imperial Platonists, namely, the attempt to develop a Platonist system that also included the Old Academy and Aristotle. The historiographical reconstruction is therefore part of philosophical polemics. If this is so, what are we to make of the much more violent polemics against the Hellenistic Academy? What was the purpose behind attacking a philosophical movement which had by Numenius' time disappeared, by emphasising its distance from the true Plato? The most reasonable hypothesis, once again, is that Numenius' target was not so much the Hellenistic Academy in itself as those Imperial Platonists who argued for its compatibility with Plato. The Platonist philosopher who, as far as we know, was most involved in this attempt is Plutarch. That Plutarch was the target, or one of the targets, of Numenius' pamphlet is a very intriguing possibility, which further suggests that he was regarded as an important philosopher of his time – a controversial Platonist, to be sure, whose views were to be refuted; but still a Platonist that deserved to be taken into account.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> With regard to Numenius, see the very detailed analysis of Frede (1987: 1040–1050).

<sup>36</sup> See Donini (1994: 5074–5075) for this hypothesis. It is also interesting to remark in passing that Neoplatonists too continued to deny that Plato and Academic scepticism had something in common. Also in their case it is tempting to say that Plutarch too, whom they knew and often criticised for his philosophical limits, (see Simonetti in this volume), was involved; see Anon. *Prol. in Plat. phil.* 10.1–12.3.

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## Plutarch and Atticism: Herodian, Phrynicus, Philostratus

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This chapter builds upon the work of Marianne Pade, who in the opening section to her *Reception of Plutarch's Lives in Fifteenth-Century Italy* mentions briefly three references to Plutarch found in authors of the second and third century AD: Herodian, Phrynicus, and Philostratus.<sup>1</sup> These references are of particular interest as they reflect the very early reception of Plutarch's works. The three men, grammarians and sophists, represent linguistic and sophistic trends of the period, which are closely tied with the phenomenon of Atticism – a movement in Greek literature and oratory which originated in the second half of the first century BC and was dedicated to the conscious emulation of the language (vocabulary, syntax, morphology) and style of Attic authors of the Classical period.<sup>2</sup> It is in the context of the discourse on proper language and style that the references to Plutarch occur; they indicate that his stance on these matters – both in terms of his judgment and his practice as a writer – was of interest to Atticistic and sophistic circles.

Although Atticism found particularly enthusiastic promoters among orators and sophists of the second and third century AD, authors of the first century BC and early first century AD (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Nicolaus of Damascus, Strabo, Philo of Alexandria) had already shared a predilection for certain Attic forms.<sup>3</sup> Several passages from Plutarch's works, which I will discuss below, testify that Atticism was gaining in strength in his lifetime.

While we think of the linguistic Atticism as a reaction against Hellenistic *koinē* Greek, a clear-cut dichotomy between the two does not provide an adequate model.<sup>4</sup> On a linguistic level there is a *continuum* between the *koinē*

<sup>1</sup> Pade (2007: 44, 48–49). A modified version of the study has been published recently: Pade (2014). For a general overview of the reception of Plutarch in antiquity, see Hirzel (1912: 74–82), Ziegler (1951: 947–949).

<sup>2</sup> Recent discussions of Atticism include Wisse (1995); Swain (1996: 17–64); Hidber (1996: 30–44); Horrocks (2010: 133–137); Kim (2010). For Dionysius of Halicarnassus, see de Jonge (2008: 9–20).

<sup>3</sup> Wahlgren (1995).

<sup>4</sup> Horrocks (2010: 135–136).

and Atticising speech. On the one hand, the language of Atticist purists inevitably included some post-classical developments; on the other, an educated author of the Imperial period – even if he did not embrace the ideology of Atticism – would quite naturally, as a result of his education, “upgrade” his *koinē* by including some “Atticisms”.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, it has been proposed by Jakob Wisse to think of Atticism “not as a well-defined body of doctrine but as a state of mind”<sup>6</sup> and to consider “not whether someone subscribed to a definite programme, but whether he was an Atticist in his own eyes or in those of his contemporaries.”<sup>7</sup>

This lack of a clear-cut dichotomy between Atticism and *koinē* Greek is apparent in the case of Plutarch. Plutarch’s language betrays a number of Attic grammatical features and there is a significant Attic component to his vocabulary.<sup>8</sup> However, he is certainly not a linguistic purist and his language – both on a syntactical and verbal level – manifests many post-classical features. Scholars hesitate whether to categorise Plutarch’s language as moderate Atticism<sup>9</sup> or as artistically developed *koinē*, retaining strong ties with Hellenistic prose.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps, as has been observed, “whether we choose to

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5 Wisse (1995: 72–73).

6 Horrocks (2010: 136).

7 Wisse (1995: 71).

8 For examination of linguistic features of Plutarch’s works, see Weissenberger (1895–1896); Schmid (1896: 635–643) (vocabulary); Russell (1973: 18–23); Hillyard (1988: xxiv–v); Yaginuma (1992); Torraca (1998); Hunter and Russell (2011: 21).

9 For Plutarch as a moderate Atticist, see e.g. Pade (2007: 48); Pade (2014: 533). According to Hunter and Russell (2011: 21) Plutarch “consciously aims to write the classical language, not the *koine* of his day, although not with the pedantic concern for exactness of linguistic imitation”. Caragounis (2010: 164–165) sees in Plutarch a representative of “the Atticist Revival” and a “fairly moderate” Atticist.

10 E.g. Horrocks (2010: 96 and 136): Plutarch, like Polybius, used language “distinct from the ‘classical’ Attic of Athenian authors of the fifth and fourth centuries BC which might fairly be regarded as an artistically ‘developed’ version of the *Koine*”; as far as his language use is concerned, Plutarch, together with Polybius and Strabo, was “among the last exponents of the Hellenistic tradition ... which was increasingly out of tune with the mood of the times”. Silk (2009: 22) lists Plutarch as a representative of a literary *koinē* together with Polybius, Septuagint, and the New Testament. Russell (1991: xxi) considers Plutarch together with Strabo, Marcus Aurelius, Galen, and Plotinus as authors “whose writing though distant enough from contemporary speech, is recognisably part of a continuous tradition to which the lost Hellenistic writers made a contribution which was not entirely disowned” and contrasts him with proponents of “reproduction Greek”, who modelled their syntax and vocabulary on the classical Attic dialect (such as Dio Chrysostom, Lucian, Aelius Aristides, Philostratus). Kim (2010: 474–475) considers Plutarch’s language close to *koinē* and contrasts it with Dio Chrysostom’s, whom he calls “arguably the first Atticist writer”.

see this as a diluted variety of classical Attic or refer to it rather as a ‘literary’ version of the *koinē* is ultimately no more than a terminological issue”.<sup>11</sup>

If, as Wisse suggests, a discussion of an author’s relationship with Atticism should consider whether he perceived himself as an Atticist and was perceived as such by his contemporaries and posterity, it may be worthwhile to briefly examine Plutarch’s own attitude to Atticism. There is no doubt that he was well aware of his contemporaries’ predilection for Attic Greek and that his diction and style were a result of a conscious decision. In *Platonic questions* 1010C, while discussing parts of speech and the prominence of nouns and verbs over articles, conjunctions, etc., he says:

... we customarily praise or censure writers of poetry and prose in terms like these, “the nouns employed by so-and-so are Attic” (*Attikois*) and “the verbs are elegant” (*kalois*) or again “pedestrian” (*pezois*), whereas it would not be said by anyone that in the language of Euripides or Thucydides “pedestrian” or again “elegant and Attic articles” are used.<sup>12</sup>

The passage bears witness to a high regard for the Attic dialect in Plutarch’s times and his awareness of it. The adjective *Attikos* (“Attic”) is used here next to *kalos* (“beautiful”) as a term denoting praise and is contrasted with *pezos* (“pedestrian”). To say that someone uses “Attic nouns” is not a descriptive statement, but a commendation of his word choices; the examples of Euripides and Thucydides (representing poetry and prose respectively) show that such opinions could have been expressed in reference to classical Athenian authors.

Another statement reveals Plutarch’s judgement on the use of Attic by his contemporaries. In *On listening to lectures*, a text addressed to a young man about to begin philosophical studies, we read (42D–E):

But he who at the very outset does not stick to the subject matter, but insists that the style shall be Attic and plain, is like the man who is unwilling to swallow an antidote for a poison unless the cup be of the finest Attic ware, or unwilling to put on an overcoat in winter unless the wool be from Attic sheep, but sits still and inactive, with a delicate thin jacket of Lysias’s language cast over him. Indeed, this sort of unhealthiness has produced much barrenness of mind and of good sense, much foolery and babble-babble in the schools, since younger men do not keep in view the

<sup>11</sup> Horrocks (2010: 96). See also Ziegler (1951: 931–932): Plutarch’s language is midway between everyday speech and educated Atticist diction.

<sup>12</sup> Trans. Cherniss (1976).

life, the actions, and the public conduct of a man who follows philosophy, but rate as matters for commendation points of style and phrasing, and a fine delivery, while as for what is being delivered, whether it be useful or useless, whether essential or empty and superfluous, they neither understand nor wish to inquire.<sup>13</sup>

As we see, Plutarch observed with apprehension the growing pressure to speak and write Attic, which as the passage indicates, did not omit the philosophers' lecture rooms. Listeners were expecting a public speaker – a teacher of philosophy in *On listening to lectures* – to speak Attic. Plutarch is very critical of this trend: he calls it a “disease” (*ta nosēmata*), which leads to the “destitution of mind”, “hair-splitting” (*terthreia*), and “wordiness” (*stōmylia*).

There is a similar statement in *On progress in virtue* 79D:

In the case, for example, of persons who make use of Plato and Xenophon for their language, and gather therefrom nothing else but the purity of the Attic style, like dew and bloom, what can you say of them, save that they are the sort of persons that content themselves with the sweet odour and bouquet of medicines, but have no desire for their sedative and purgative virtues, nor the power to discern them?<sup>14</sup>

Plutarch warns here against reading Attic authors with the sole purpose of learning their style and diction. In *On listening to lectures* he instructed the addressee that a speech should be listened to with an eye on its usefulness – the same applies to reading a text. At the same time, we should notice positive associations of the Attic dialect (purity, dew, flowers, and nice fragrance), which are also present in the passage from the *Platonic questions* which I quoted above.

The opening of the *Life of Nicias* reveals Plutarch's position regarding stylistic mimesis and, more generally, regarding attention to matters of style. He modestly affirms that he does not attempt to surpass Thucydides while narrating the same events as him and he explicitly distances himself from authors who attach great importance to style and diction, since their attitude is

<sup>13</sup> Trans. Babbitt (1927), modified. There are some textual difficulties, for which see Hillyard (1988: 133–137).

<sup>14</sup> Trans. Babbitt (1927). A similar complaint is raised by a Platonic philosopher, Calvisius Taurus, in Gellius, *NA* 1.9.10: “By Jupiter!, said he, one man actually asks to read Plato, not in order to better his life, but to deck out his diction and style, not to gain in discretion, but in prettiness”, trans. Rolfe (1946: 49).

sophistic: "... as for me, I think that jealous rivalry and contest with others in matters of style is small-minded and sophistic ..." (*Nic.* 1.4).

Finally, there is a testimony regarding Plutarch's attitude to style in Isidore of Pelusium (fourth/fifth century AD), who remarks in one of his letters:

Plutarch thinks that a clear, simple style constitutes genuine Atticism. That, he explains, is how orators talked. Gorgias from Leontini was the first to introduce this malady into political oratory, by showing a liking for elevated language and figures of speech and by doing violence to clarity. This disease, as Plutarch says, attacked even that wonderful man Plato.<sup>15</sup>

The passage is not unproblematic. It is unclear whether this is a reference to a lost work of Plutarch, a loose paraphrase, or a mistaken attribution. In extant works Plutarch never uses the term "Atticism" (*Attikismos*), which has only a handful of occurrences in extant Greek literature before the second century AD. The passage itself is somewhat obscure. The first sentence suggests that Plutarch distinguished a "genuine Atticism", which he associated with simplicity. "That ... is how orators talked" probably refers to model Attic orators such as Lysias; "the malady", presumably of ornate, elevated style, is associated with Gorgias. The distinction implied, then, is not precisely between Attic and non-Attic, but between different rhetorical styles. It should be added that we do not find criticism of Plato's style in extant works of Plutarch, though they are not absent in other authors.<sup>16</sup> The passage, however, undoubtedly testifies to the authority of Plutarch among Isidore's contemporaries and to their interest in his views on matters of style.

## **1      Herodian and the Pseudo-Plutarchan *Lives of the ten orators***

I turn now to Herodian, a second-century author of grammatical treatises (not to be confused with a historian of the second and third century AD). Herodian lived under Marcus Aurelius, to whom he dedicated his *Catholic prosody*, a systematic exposition of Greek accentuation; the work survives in epitomes

<sup>15</sup> Isidorus Pelusiotes, *Epistulae* 2.42. (PG 78, col. 484 B–D); trans. Sandbach (1969: 347), modified.

<sup>16</sup> E.g. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Dem.* 5–7. Dionysius in particular criticises Plato for his use of ornate and obscure style, and his fondness for artificiality and "Gorgianic" figures. Aelius Aristides in his *To Plato: In defense of oratory* argues that Plato, regardless of his criticism of rhetoric, was, in fact, the father and teacher of orators (*Or.* 2.465).

and fragments.<sup>17</sup> He also authored a text on Homeric accentuation and numerous grammatical works; the only extant writing deals with anomalous words (*On lexical singularity*).

Marianne Pade has observed that Herodian refers in *Catholic prosody* to a passage from pseudo-Plutarch's *Lives of the ten orators* and ascribes it to Plutarch.<sup>18</sup> If that were true, we would have the evidence that spurious works circulated under Plutarch's name shortly after his death, and that he was believed to have composed biographies of the ten orators – a work more likely to have been written by a sophist or a grammarian than by Plutarch. In Lentz's edition of *Catholic prosody* 3.1.123 we read:

The word “Asclepius” has an accent on the last syllable. Demosthenes, when he worshipped Asclepius, believed that the word’s accent on the last syllable was unreasonable and dared to pronounce it with an accent on the third syllable from the end, as Plutarch records.<sup>19</sup>

The passage seems to refer to the *Life of Demosthenes*, one of the biographies included in the pseudo-Plutarchan *Lives of the ten orators* (845B):

He used to swear by Asclépius, putting the accent on the third syllable from the end, though it is properly on the final syllable; and he offered a proof that he was right, for he said that the god was “mild” (*ēpios*). For this also he often provoked a clamour from the audience.<sup>20</sup>

However, upon close inspection of Lentz's editorial practices, one discovers that the text is not a faithful rendition of two surviving epitomes of Herodian's work but the editor's attempt to reconstruct it – an attempt which led Lentz to supplement the epitomes rather freely with additional material.<sup>21</sup> In the case of the quoted passage the epitome has only “The word ‘Asclepius’ has an accent on the last syllable” (*to de Asklépios oxynetai*). The anecdote about Demosthenes and the reference to Plutarch were supplied by Lentz from Eustathios of Thessalonike (twelfth century AD).<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> For Herodian, see Dyck (1993), Dickey (2007: 75–77).

<sup>18</sup> Pade (2007: 44). Herodian is not mentioned in Pade (2014).

<sup>19</sup> Ed. Lentz (1867: 123); trans. Jaźdżewska.

<sup>20</sup> Trans. Fowler (1936) with minor alterations.

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of Lentz's edition, see Dyck (1993: 775–783) with references to previous scholarship.

<sup>22</sup> Already Gallo (1973) protested against Lentz's reconstruction of this passage.

The claim that Herodian ascribed the *Lives of the ten orators* to Plutarch is, therefore, untenable. However, one can ask when the work was composed and when it was included in the Plutarchan *corpus*. A recent examination of the *Lives of the ten orators* suggests that the text in its current form could not have been composed before 220–230 AD, which provides us with a *terminus post quem*.<sup>23</sup> It is included in the Lamprias Catalogue, a list of Plutarch's works, which probably originated in the third or fourth century AD.<sup>24</sup> It is therefore possible that the work was ascribed to Plutarch when the Lamprias Catalogue was composed. I say "possible", because the catalogue must be approached with great caution. With all probability it originated as a list in a library collection<sup>25</sup> and apart from genuine works of Plutarch and Plutarchan *spuria* it also includes such surprising titles as Aristotle's *Topica* (no. 56) and Protagoras' *On the first things* (no. 141), as well as a number of titles never associated with Plutarch in other sources. Consequently, inclusion of a work in the list does not necessarily mean that it was ascribed to Plutarch at the time of the list's composition – if it was a library list, the Catalogue might include misplaced volumes or anonymous works placed on a shelf next to Plutarch's texts as a result of thematic affinity. The attribution of the *Lives of the ten orators* to Plutarch seems not to have been universally accepted by the Byzantines: Photios, for example, who probably drew from the pseudo-Plutarchan *Lives* for his biographies of the ten orators, does not associate it with Plutarch.<sup>26</sup>

## 2 Phrynicus and Plutarch's Linguistic Sins

Phrynicus was a grammarian of the second century AD, whose works focused on correct use of the Attic dialect. He was the author of a lexicon of Attic vocabulary in thirty-seven books (*Sophistic propaedeutic*, extant in fragments) and a work which reached us under the title *Selection of Attic verbs and nouns*,<sup>27</sup> in which he provided an addressee, Cornelianus, with advice on the proper Attic diction. The work is structured as a series of entries. In a lemma

<sup>23</sup> Roisman and Worthington (2015: 13–14). For a discussion of the *Lives of the ten orators*, see also Schaefer (1844); Pitcher (2005); Martin (2014).

<sup>24</sup> It is included as number 41, following other biographies.

<sup>25</sup> Treu (1873); Irigoin (1986).

<sup>26</sup> Roisman and Worthington (2015: 12).

<sup>27</sup> The extant *Eclipe* has been typically considered an abridgment of a larger work; this is doubted by Fischer (1974: 37). For a discussion of the text, see Rutherford (1881); Fischer (1974).

Phrynicus usually provides a non-Attic or incorrect word or form; then he frequently informs the reader about which author made such an error, why it should be avoided, and what the proper Attic replacement is.

Phrynicus inspects the language of both the ancients and his contemporaries. Among the authors whose word choices Phrynicus chides are, for instance, Xenophon (who “transgresses against his mother-tongue”),<sup>28</sup> Aristotle and the Stoics. He finds various non-standard forms in Athenian comedies and tragedies, and advises the addressee not to imitate the poets, whose diction is influenced, among other things, by demands of the metre. Among Imperial authors, Phrynicus frequently censures Favorinus (e.g. entries 161, 163, 172, 185, 207, 209, 215, 216, 218, 228), Lollianus, whom he finds overzealous but not very successful in his attempts to speak Attic (140, 141, 152), Dio Chrysostom (22), and Polemo (140, 236, 396).

Phrynicus twice criticises Plutarch for his use of the words *dysōpeisthai* and *synkrisis*:

(160) *Dysōpeisthai*: There is a book by Plutarch *On dysōpia*,<sup>29</sup> he thinks that this word means “to feel shame” and “not withstand something because of shame”. However, *dysōpia* means for the ancients “suspicion” and “to be suspicious”.<sup>30</sup>

(243) *synkrisis*: Plutarch entitled one of his works “A *synkrisis* of Aristophanes and Menander”. I wonder how it happened that such a man, who reached a peak of philosophy and knew very well what a *synkrisis* is, used such an inappropriate word. Similarly to *synkrinein* and *synekrinen* are mistaken. One should rather say *antexetazein* and *paraballein*.

Phrynicus is right that Plutarch’s use of the two words is non-classical. As for *dysōpeisthai*, we find a few instances of its use in Xenophon and Plato’s works. Xenophon uses the verb in reference to animals being timid, while in Plato it means “to be disconcerted, disturbed”.<sup>31</sup> The noun *dysōpia* seems to be post-classical. As for the second objection, Phrynicus blames Plutarch for using the noun *synkrisis* in the sense of “a comparison” rather than “a combination”. It is not a recent development – *synkrisis* was used as “a comparison” already

<sup>28</sup> Phryn. *Ecl.* 62.

<sup>29</sup> I.e. *De vitiioso pudore*.

<sup>30</sup> The passage seems to have been wrongly understood by Richter (2011: 139): “Plutarch is criticized for his use of the term δυσωπεῖσθαι, a word that is ‘not found among the ancients’.”

<sup>31</sup> Xen. *Mem.* 2.1.4, *Cyn.* 9.17; Pl. *Plt.* 285b, *Phdr.* 242c, *Lg.* 933a.

by Aristotle.<sup>32</sup> Phrynicus probably mentions Plutarch's philosophical background ("such a man, who reached a peak of philosophy") because, remarkably, in the extant classical Attic literature the term *synkrisis* is used chiefly by Plato, for whom it means "a combination".<sup>33</sup> Therefore, Phrynicus may be chiding Plutarch for a breach of proper Platonic usage.

The two references to Plutarch indicate his popularity and authority as a philosopher in Phrynicus' environment. He is not the only contemporary author singled out by Phrynicus for his errors – in fact he is in the distinguished company of men such as Dio, Favorinus, and Polemo. Phrynicus might have chosen well-known and generally recognised writers and orators on purpose, worrying that their word choices may legitimise "incorrect" diction in the eyes of their audience.

Interestingly, in both discussed passages Phrynicus seems to have been alerted by the titles of Plutarch's works. In the case of *On harmful scrupulousness* he had to read the opening of the treatise, in which Plutarch's understanding of the term *dysōpia* is made clear. As for *synkrisis*, it is remarkable that he refers to the title of the *Comparison of Aristophanes and Menander* rather than to the numerous uses of the term in comparisons of protagonists of the *Parallel lives*. Consequently, we may conclude that Phrynicus did not have to read much Plutarch to make his critical remarks.

### 3 Philostratus on Plutarch and the Sophists

Finally, we have a reference to Plutarch in a letter of the sophist Flavius Philostratus (second/third century AD), known mostly as the author of the *Lives of the sophists* and the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*; among other works attributed to him are the dialogues *On heroes* and *Nero*, a work on sport (*Concerning gymnastics*), and the *Images*.<sup>34</sup> We also have seventy-three letters written by him to various addressees. The last letter in the collection is addressed to Julia Domna, the wife of the emperor Septimius Severus, known for her intellectual interests and impressive learning (Philostratus elsewhere

<sup>32</sup> E.g. Arist. *Top.* 102b, 119a, 128a; similarly *synkrinō* as "compare" in *Rhet.* 1368a. In biological texts, however, *synkrisis* retains the meaning "combination" (for instance in *On generation and corruption* or in the *Metaphysics*).

<sup>33</sup> In Plato *synkrisis* is typically contrasted with *diakrisis*, "separation", e.g. *Sph.* 243b, *Phlb.* 42c, *Ti.* 64e, 65c.

<sup>34</sup> For an overview of Philostratus' life and works (and their debated attribution), see Bowie and Elsner (2009).

boasted of familiarity with the empress<sup>35</sup>). The letter has been considered spurious by some, but today scholars tend to declare it a genuine Philostratean writing.<sup>36</sup>

The letter is a defence of sophists, whom, Philostratus says, even Plato emulated. Philostratus is particularly interested in defending Gorgias, who, as he believes, influenced not only orators, but also philosophers. The letter ends with a reference to Plutarch:

So, my empress, persuade Plutarch, who is more forward than any other Greek,<sup>37</sup> not to be annoyed at the sophists nor to resort to slandering Gorgias. If you cannot persuade him, then you in your wisdom and knowledge know what epithet must be bestowed on such a person. I myself can say what that epithet is – and yet cannot do so.<sup>38</sup>

As has been rightly argued, the reference to Plutarch – dead for about hundred years – as if to a contemporary of Philostratus and Julia Domna is a literary play rather than proof that the letter is a work of an incompetent and confused forger. As in Isidore of Pelusium's letter, Plutarch is treated here as an authority whose opinion on the sophists matters; and this opinion is upsetting for Philostratus, who, both in the letter and in the *Lives of the sophists*, is committed to a rehabilitation of the sophistic movement.

It is unclear what text of Plutarch Philostratus is referring to. In Plutarch's extant writings we do not find any "slandering" of Gorgias, though Plutarch is frequently critical of sophists, in particular contemporary ones. The letter of Isidore of Pelusium, if it is a paraphrase of a genuine text by Plutarch, indicates that Plutarch may have blamed Gorgias for introducing an ornate, elaborate style to oratory, a style that even Plato was unable to resist at times. There is thus some probability that Isidore and Philostratus are referring to the same work.

The tenor of Philostratus' words is reminiscent of Aelius Aristides' criticisms of Plato, whom he accuses of slandering and abusing rhetoric. In both cases a sophist (Aristides or Philostratus) is defending rhetoric/the sophists

<sup>35</sup> In the VA 1.3.1 he says that he belonged to Julia's "circle" and that she asked him to transcribe memoirs of Damis, a disciple of Apollonius.

<sup>36</sup> The letter was rejected as spurious by Bowersock (1969: 104); its authenticity was defended by Jones (1971: 131–132); Anderson (1977); Penella (1979).

<sup>37</sup> For the problematic meaning of the expression "*ton tharsaleōteron tou hellēnikou*", see Anderson (1977: 45, n. 8).

<sup>38</sup> Trans. Penella (1979: 163). For speculations about the epithet which Philostratus has in mind, see Demoen and Praet (2012).

against a philosopher (Plato or Plutarch), who is vigorously accused of unfair, rash treatment of rhetoric and its representatives, i.e. the sophists ("slander-ing"). It is possible that Philostratus was inspired here by Aristides, with whom he was familiar and to whom he dedicated a chapter in his *Lives of the sophists*.

#### 4 Conclusion

Although the source material discussed in this chapter is meagre, it testifies to Plutarch's established authority towards the end of the second and beginning of the third century AD. He is referred to by Phrynicus in a work on proper Attic diction and by Philostratus in a letter addressed to the empress Julia Domna. Plutarch is associated by Phrynicus and Philostratus with philosophy, yet his diction and stance on issues of style, language, and rhetoric are of interest to grammarians and sophists. In several extant texts Plutarch expressed his opinions on these matters, and it is possible that there was more in the texts that are lost, as is suggested by the letters of Philostratus and Isidore.

The reference to Plutarch in Herodian's work on accentuation has to be excluded, as it comes from a much later Byzantine source, which was misleadingly incorporated by the editor within the main body of the reconstructed text. Therefore, there is no argument for an early, second-century attribution of the *Lives of the ten orators* to Plutarch, though it is possible that the work was ascribed to him around the time of the composition of the Lamprias Catalogue.

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# Plutarch and the Papyrological Evidence

*Thomas Schmidt*

Plutarch's works have enjoyed immense popularity over the centuries and have exerted considerable influence on the entire Western culture, as the present volume illustrates very effectively. Already in antiquity, Plutarch's fame is well attested in pagan and Christian circles alike, and it can actually be traced as far back as the second half of the second century, to Apuleius and Gellius, who are generally regarded as the earliest literary references to Plutarch, dating to c. 170 AD, that is, just about half a century after his death (see Oikonomopoulou in this volume; cf. Vamvouri Ruffy). However, in asserting Plutarch's legacy, even the most recent studies on the Chaeronean have failed to take into account the papyrological evidence,<sup>1</sup> of which the present chapter will give a general overview.<sup>2</sup>

There are currently seventeen known papyri of Plutarch's writings:<sup>3</sup> five featuring the *Lives* and twelve the *Moralia* (see list below). To this list might be added a fragment from *On god's slowness to punish* (565A), which has recently been identified within an anthology of the *Corpus Hermeticum* on a Berlin papyrus;<sup>4</sup> however, since this papyrus bears a single quotation from Plutarch among many other texts and does not actually transmit any of his works, it

<sup>1</sup> Notable exceptions are Stadter (2015: 197–198) and (with a different perspective) Pordomingo (2005). The papyri themselves have been studied by Indelli (1995) and Fernández Delgado (2013).

<sup>2</sup> This chapter is meant as an update of my paper presented in 2011 at the I.P.S. congress in Ravello and published as Schmidt (2013). Since then, a number of publications on Plutarch papyri have appeared, notably the editions of nine new fragments from the Oxyrhynchus collection (nos. 5153–5158, 5270–5271 and 5301) and two from Geneva (Schmidt *et al.* 2013), as well as the re-editions (with additional fragments) of papyri in Florence (PSI 16.1607 and 1608) and in Cologne and Durham NC (P.Köln 13.499), and various new identifications or reinterpretations of published papyri from Berlin (Azzarà 2011), Cologne (Lunden 2013), Oxford (Danbeck 2013 and Bruselas/Meccariello 2015).

<sup>3</sup> As seems obvious, in the present list all fragments from the same papyrus roll or codex count as one single papyrus, even when located in different collections.

<sup>4</sup> P.Berol. inv. 17027 (LDAB 3542 = TM 62377). The papyrus was originally published by Stahlschmidt (1942) and has recently been fully reedited by Van den Kerchove (2006). The actual identification of the Plutarch quotation was made by Azzarà (2011).

has not been included here, although it is, of course, an interesting witness to indirect transmission. Also excluded are four papyri which have occasionally been associated with Plutarch's works because of thematic similarities, but which do not actually belong to the Plutarchan corpus: P.Oxy. 34.2688 and 2689 (a series of questions similar to the *Greek questions*, but obviously not part of this work), P.Lond.Lit. 175 (allegorical interpretations of Homer showing similarities with the pseudo-Plutarchan *Life of Homer*) and P.Oxy. 3.441 (an anthology of anecdotes, of which one comes close to a passage in the *Advice on marriage*).<sup>5</sup>

For the sake of clarity, the papyri are listed here (with minimal information) according to their content; more detailed information on each papyrus (with a full bibliography) can be found at the end of this chapter, where the papyri are listed in chronological order.

LIVES	Contents	Date	Format	Provenance
P.Oxy. 52.3684	<i>Lycurgus</i> 31.6–8	III	papyrus roll	Oxyrhynchus
P.Heid. 1.209	<i>Pelopidas</i> 7.1–5	180	papyrus roll	unknown
P.Oxy. 82.5301	<i>Alexander</i> 42.8–10, 43.3	III	papyrus roll (?)	Oxyrhynchus
P.Köln 13.499 + P.Gen. inv. var.	<i>Caesar</i> 1–3, 33–35, 59–61	II–III	papyrus roll	unknown
P.Oxy. 81.5270	<i>Caesar</i> 45.8–46.1	late II / early III	papyrus roll	Oxyrhynchus

5 For complete information on these four papyri, see the relevant references in the usual papyrological databases (listed at the end of this chapter): P.Oxy. 34.2688 (LDAB 5373; TM 64154; Mertens-Pack<sup>3</sup> 2463.1); P.Oxy. 34.2689 (LDAB 5374; TM 64155; Mertens-Pack<sup>3</sup> 2463.2); P.Lond. Lit. 175 (LDAB 1960; TM 60832; Mertens-Pack<sup>3</sup> 1223); P.Oxy. 3.441 (LDAB 3854; TM 62666; Mertens-Pack<sup>3</sup> 1995). Fernández Delgado (2013: 139–40) lists two further items which have an indirect connection with Plutarch: P.Mil.Vogl. 2.48 (an anecdote on Pyrrhus which also appears twice in Plutarch; LDAB 5070; TM 63860; Mertens-Pack<sup>3</sup> 2082) and a *dipinto* (painted inscription) from a school-house wall in Amheida (a reworking of an anecdote on Anteas, king of the Scythians, which also occurs twice in Plutarch; see Cribiore/Davoli 2013: 9–11). None of these are actual quotations from Plutarch.

(cont.)

MORALIA	Contents	Date	Format	Provenance
P.Oxy. 78.5153	<i>De prof. in virt.</i> 75A–C	II	papyrus roll	Oxyrhynchus
P.Oxy. 78.5154	<i>Con. praec.</i> 139E–140D	III	papyrus roll	Oxyrhynchus
P.Oxy. 52.3685	<i>Sept. sap. conv.</i> 155C	II (1st half)	papyrus roll	Oxyrhynchus
P.Oxy. 78.5155	<i>Reg. et imp. apophth.</i> 191E–F	III–IV	papyrus roll	Oxyrhynchus
PSI 16.1607	<i>De coh. ira</i> 452F	II (1st half)	papyrus roll	unknown
P.Harrauer 1	<i>De coh. ira</i> 456F–457B	V	parchment codex	unknown
PSI 16.1608	<i>Quaest. conv.</i> 660C–D, 661B–D, 671A–D	II	papyrus roll	Oxyrhynchus ?
P.Laur. inv. III/543 A	<i>Quaest. conv.</i> 715D	II	papyrus roll	Oxyrhynchus ?
P.Oxy. 78.5157	<i>Quaest. conv.</i> 732E–F	II	papyrus roll	Oxyrhynchus
P.Ant. 2.85 + 3.213	Epitome <i>Plac. philos.</i> passim 890E–909D	III	papyrus codex	Antinoopolis
P.Oxy. 78.5158	<i>De soll. an.</i> 963D	III	papyrus roll	Oxyrhynchus
P.Oxy. 81.5271	<i>Proverb. Alexandrin.</i> 50 (?)	III	papyrus roll (?)	Oxyrhynchus

The total number of Plutarch papyri (17) may seem negligible when compared with those ancient authors who are most represented on papyri, such as Homer (1708 papyri), Demosthenes (205), Euripides (172), Isocrates (132) or Menander (121).<sup>6</sup> It is far less so, however, in comparison with authors more

<sup>6</sup> These figures are based on a search carried out in December 2015 within the *Mertens-Pack<sup>3</sup> Online Database* (see bibliography at the end of this chapter).

or less contemporary with Plutarch: Dio of Prusa (1), Chariton (4), Arrian (2), Lucian (1), Aelius Aristides (7), Galen (11), Athenaeus (0), Longus (0). Despite the (admittedly) aleatory nature of papyrus finds, these numbers testify to a genuine interest in Plutarch's works in Graeco-Roman Egypt. Statistically, they show a certain predominance of the *Moralia* (attested on 12 papyri) over the *Lives* (5 papyri), although, in regard to the small numbers involved, these figures should not be overrated. It might be tempting to link this to the preference for Plutarch's ethical works displayed by late antique and especially Christian authors (see the chapters in the second section of this volume); and the existence of Syriac translations of works such as *On the control of anger* (which, incidentally, is twice attested on our papyri, see Rigolio in this volume) and *How to profit from your enemies* (and possibly others) among early Christian communities seems to point in the same direction, although great caution should be taken in these matters. It is noteworthy that three of the works attested on the papyri (*Sayings of kings and commanders*, *Doctrines of the philosophers* and *Alexandrian proverbs*) are generally considered spurious; obviously, their presence on papyri does not make these works genuine, but it does attest to their early circulation.

As primary sources, these seventeen papyri offer clear evidence of the early circulation of Plutarch's works in Graeco-Roman Egypt. Except for two later papyri, P.Harrauer 1 (fifth c. AD) and P.Oxy. 78.5155 (third/fourth c. AD), all of them can be assigned on palaeographical grounds to the second and third centuries and thus attest Plutarch's early fame. Those dated to the second century are particularly interesting because they are very close to Plutarch's own lifetime. So P.Heid. 1.209 (*Pelopidas*) is dated by its first editor to around 180 AD, that is, roughly 70 to 80 years after the *Lives* were composed (between 100 and 115 AD). Even closer are the two Florentine papyri of the *Table talk* (PSI 16.1608 and P.Laur. inv. III/543A): both have been assigned by their editors to the second century, but a closer palaeographical analysis suggests that they may be dated as early as the mid-second century.<sup>7</sup> Since it is known that Plutarch wrote the *Table talk* in old age (probably around 110–20 AD), these two papyri, if correctly dated, attest to the circulation of this work in Egypt just about thirty years after it was written. Likewise, P.Oxy. 78.5157 (*Quaest. conv.*) has been dated by its editors "within a generation of the author's lifetime", which may also be the case for P.Oxy. 78.5153 (*De prof. in virt.*). Perhaps of an even earlier date are P.Oxy. 52.3685 (*Sept. sap. conv.*) and PSI 16.1607 (*De coh. ira*), both of which have been or can be assigned to a date early in the first half

<sup>7</sup> Schmidt (2013: 394–395).

of the second century.<sup>8</sup> If this dating is correct, then these two works may have circulated in Egypt during Plutarch's own lifetime (!) or just one generation after his death, which occurred sometime around 125 AD. These two papyri, together with the two previously mentioned Florentine papyri and possibly the two fragments from Oxyrhynchus, ought thus to be considered the earliest attestations of Plutarch's works, and not the quotations by Apuleius and Gellius, as is commonly believed.

In four cases (see list above), the exact provenance of the papyri cannot be ascertained (although they were all found in Egypt), and one papyrus (P.Ant. 2.85 + 3.213) originates in Antinoopolis. Of the remaining twelve papyri, ten certainly and two probably come from Oxyrhynchus. This may be due to mere chance, but it has also been suggested that these papyri may have originally belonged to one and the same library at Oxyrhynchus.<sup>9</sup> The quality of these papyrus rolls, ranging from good to high (see below), would certainly speak in favour of this hypothesis, but no other element confirms it. More interesting, however, is the fact that all these papyri come from Egypt: they show that Plutarch's fame spread far beyond the large cultural centres of the Roman Empire, such as Athens and Rome, where one would expect Plutarch's works to have been widely read, or even Antioch and Pergamon, where he had friends, or Alexandria, where he once stayed for a longer period, and that it reached cities such as Oxyrhynchus and Antinoopolis. Admittedly, these two were not remote cities, but nome capitals: in Roman times Oxyrhynchus had around 30,000 inhabitants, which makes it a city of respectable size, with its theatre, gymnasium, library, and public baths.<sup>10</sup> However, it is remarkable to see Plutarch's works circulating in such places so shortly after they were written.

From a bibliographical point of view, two of these seventeen papyri were part of codices, one made of parchment (P.Harrauer 1, fifth century) and the other of papyrus (P.Ant. 2.85 + 3.213, third century). It is no surprise that both are to be found among the later papyri of Plutarch, as the codex developed late in antiquity and superseded the papyrus roll only from the fourth century onwards. The known relation between the development of the codex and the preference of Christian circles for this type of book format<sup>11</sup> makes it tempting to imagine that these two codices of Plutarch were circulating among early Christian communities, especially in the case of P.Harrauer 1 which transmits

<sup>8</sup> Schmidt (2013: 395).

<sup>9</sup> Messeri Savorelli-Pintaudi (1997: 175).

<sup>10</sup> Bowman (2007).

<sup>11</sup> On the development of the codex and its relation to Christian culture, see especially Roberts/Skeat (1983: 35–61), Hurtado (2006: 43–93), Wallraff (2013: 8–25).

a work (*De coh. ira*) that was translated into Syriac shortly afterwards (sixth century) and clearly within a Christian context, but this is pure speculation, as none of these fragments shows distinctive signs which would point in that direction.<sup>12</sup> However this may be, both fragments are of high quality and testify to the high regard in which Plutarch's works were held at the time. Especially P.Harrauer 1 was part of a luxury edition, as can be deduced from the fine quality of the parchment, the neat and regular handwriting and the carefully laid-out column (with vertical and horizontal ruling marks). Likewise, the Antinoopolis fragments, though displaying a less formal script, show features of a high-quality edition, such as the large format of the pages (more than 20 cm wide and up to 35 cm high, with large margins of at least 5 cm on both sides and probably also at the top and bottom) and the presence of titles and of numbered sections.<sup>13</sup> Clearly, these two Plutarch codices were no ordinary copies, but library or bookstore editions of high quality.

A similar conclusion can be reached about the other papyri, all of which (except two) were part of papyrus rolls and are blank on the verso, which means that they were not reused second-hand rolls, but library or bookstore copies.<sup>14</sup> The majority of them are of high quality, as can be recognised from their careful scripts, large margins, and the presence of diacritical signs. Such is the case for P.Oxy. 52.3684, with its neat "severe style" handwriting, its large upper margin (more than 5 cm) and its occasional diacritical signs, and for P.Heid. 1.209, which also displays a careful hand, a large lower margin (more than 5.5 cm) and a number of hook-shaped line-filler meant to give the layout a nice regular appearance. Likewise, the following may all be regarded as examples of high-quality editions:<sup>15</sup> P.Köln 13.499 (carefully written in a "severe style" hand and displaying numerous diacritical signs and line-filler as well as large upper and lower margins), P.Oxy. 52.3685 (with its handsome layout and its calligraphic hand close to the "Roman uncial" type), PSI 16.1607 (another fine example of a "Roman uncial" with well-rounded and decorated letters), as well as P.Oxy. 78.5153 ("elegant script of the 'Roman uncial' type" with line-filler), P.Oxy. 78.5154 ("well-executed Severe Style hand" with various diacritical signs) and P.Oxy. 78.5158 ("regular version of the Severe

<sup>12</sup> On this hypothesis, see the remarks in the *editio princeps* (n. 16 and 18) as well as Rigolio (2013).

<sup>13</sup> It is listed among the largest known papyrus codices by Turner (1975: 309–310 and 1977: 14).

<sup>14</sup> The exceptions are P.Oxy. 81.5271 (*Prov. Alexandr.*), written on the verso of an account, and P.Oxy. 82.5301 (*Life of Alexander*), written on the back of an unidentified literary text. Both could be private copies.

<sup>15</sup> In the following, all quoted phrases come from the editions of the respective papyri.

Style" with "angular and precisely formed" letters). Of slightly lower quality, but still to be considered fair bookstore or library editions, are the following papyri: P.Laur. inv. III/543A (round fluent informal bookhand), PSI 16.1608 (a roll of discrete quality, but displaying large margins as well as section titles), P.Oxy. 78.5155 ("rather slack Severe Style" with fair margins and a few diacritical signs) and P.Oxy. 78.5157 ("small informal and rather variable round hand" with punctuation by 'paragraphoi'). One of the new fragments from Oxyrhynchus (P.Oxy. 81.5270) also derives from a papyrus roll with a blank verso and thus confirms that all but two of the presently known Plutarch papyri were originally part of bookstore or library copies of good to high quality, a fact that testifies to the high regard in which Plutarch's works were held.

Another bibliographical feature of interest is the estimated length of the papyrus rolls which contained Plutarch's works. In some cases, when the height of the columns can be ascertained and the average number of letters per line is known, it is possible to calculate the space that the work in question would have occupied and henceforth to estimate the length of that particular roll (in the assumption that it contained only this one work). The following roll-length can thus be calculated for works within the *Moralia*: 3 metres for *Advice on marriage* (P.Oxy. 78.5154) and for *On the intelligence of animals* (P.Oxy. 78.5158), 4.8 metres for *On progress in virtue* (P.Oxy. 78.5153), 7.15 metres for *Symposium of the seven sages* (P.Oxy. 52.3685) and 12.5 metres for *Sayings of kings and commanders* (P.Oxy. 78.5155). All of these fit within the normative range of 3 to 15 metres that has been assessed for the ancient bookroll.<sup>16</sup> The question is more interesting when it comes to the *Parallel lives*, as these were conceived by Plutarch as pairs. In the case of P.Oxy. 52.3684, it has been calculated that the *Life of Lycurgus* would have had a length of 7.5 metres. The editor of the papyrus, Helen Cockle, concluded from this that the roll in question was likely to have contained only the *Life of Lycurgus* and not also its Roman counterpart, the *Life of Numa*, as both together would have made up a roll of nearly 15 metres,<sup>17</sup> which would have been difficult for the reader to handle and which, according to the data available to Cockle at the time of publication, seemed to be far above the average length of a papyrus roll. According to William Johnson's more recent assessments, however, a length of 15 metres would still fall within the normative range of a single roll, so that it is conceivable that P.Oxy. 52.3684 originally contained both the *Life of Lycurgus* and

<sup>16</sup> According to Johnson (2009: 264), based on Johnson (2004: 143–152).

<sup>17</sup> Based on the calculations in the *editio princeps* (p. 117) and confirmed as follows: if the *Life of Lycurgus* (9,749 words according to the TLG) occupied a space of 7.5 m, the *Life of Numa* (9,425 words with the concluding *synkrisis*) would have covered c. 7.25 m.

the *Life of Numa* grouped as a pair. But Cockle's hypothesis of an individual transmission of Plutarch's *Lives* seems to be supported by two further papyri. In the case of P.Heid. 1.209, the *Life of Pelopidas* would have had a length of 11.7 metres, which is acceptable in itself, but makes it unlikely that the same roll also contained the parallel *Life of Marcellus*, as the total length of the roll (22–23 metres) would then have been far above the norm.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, the *Life of Caesar* as transmitted on P.Köln 13.499 can be estimated to have had a length of nearly 13 metres. Considering that its Greek counterpart, the *Life of Alexander*, is even more extensive and would have been approximately 16 metres long, it is highly improbable that both *Lives* would have been contained on a single roll of nearly 29 metres (!).<sup>19</sup> These examples rather suggest that Plutarch's *Lives* circulated individually, each on a separate roll, and not as pairs.

As primary sources, the papyri offer an interesting insight into the direct textual tradition of Plutarch's works in antiquity, as they precede the first extant Byzantine manuscripts by several centuries and as, for some of them, there must have been very few intermediaries between the original and the copy preserved on papyrus. Indeed, the papyri contain a number of significant textual variants, often superior to those of the manuscripts and in some cases confirming modern conjectures. Lack of space will not allow me to discuss them here. The work has been carried out with great care by Indelli (1995) and by Fernández Delgado (2013), and a useful overview of the textual variants

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<sup>18</sup> Based on the following calculation: as the two complete columns of text (col. 2 and 3) have a total of 132 words, the whole of the *Life of Pelopidas* (9,850 words in the TLG) would have occupied 149 columns; the total width of a column and of the intercolumnium (i.e. space between columns) being 7.85 cm, these 149 columns would have filled a roll of 11.7 m. The length of the *Life of Marcellus* (9,678 words with the concluding *synkrisis*) would have been similar to that of *Pelopidas*.

<sup>19</sup> See Lunden's calculation (P.Köln 13.499: 7 with notes 12 to 14). Accordingly, if the *Life of Caesar* (16,059 words in the TLG / 16,522 (?) words according to Lunden) fills a space of 12.78 m, then the *Life of Alexander* (20,065 words in the TLG) would have occupied 15.96 m (or 15.52 m using Lunden's figures). As Lunden points out, the extraordinary length of the *Alexander-Caesar* confirms Stadter's hypothesis (1988: 277 and 2015: 198) that this pair was divided into two separate rolls, whereas Pelling (2011: 130), though not excluding this possibility, believes it more probable that both *Lives* were contained on a single roll (in regard to the continuous damage to the end of the *Alexander* and the beginning of the *Caesar*). Although improbable, it is not entirely impossible to imagine a single roll of such length, cf. Johnson (2004: 149): "The data here suggest, however, an upper limit extending at least to 15 meters, with great likelihood of odd examples extending to a length considerably beyond that."

displayed by the six new fragments published in volume 78 of the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* is given by Brusuelas and Parsons.<sup>20</sup>

One textual problem, however, deserves a special mention: it concerns the beginning of the *Life of Caesar* in P.Köln. 1.47 fr. A (which is part of P.Köln 13.499). This tiny fragment is highly interesting because the letters visible at the end of its first line coincide with the very beginning of the *Life of Caesar* as transmitted by the medieval manuscripts (1.1: “*tēn Kinna ...*”). This beginning, however, being extremely abrupt and relating events which fall already within the sixteenth year of Caesar’s life, have lead scholars such as Niebuhr and Ziegler to suspect that the beginning of the *Life of Caesar* has actually been lost. Combined with the fact that the end of its Greek counterpart, the *Life of Alexander*, also appears to be incomplete and that two passages of Zonaras’ *Epitome* (a Byzantine historical compilation of the twelfth century; see Kampianaki in this volume) seem to paraphrase some of the lost sections from the end of the *Alexander* and the beginning of the *Caesar*, their assumption of the loss of one or several folios within the manuscript tradition of these two *Lives* has become the *communis opinio*, as exemplified by the most recent treatments of the question by Pelling<sup>21</sup> and Duff.<sup>22</sup> The Cologne papyrus fragment seems to provide the definitive proof that the beginning of the *Caesar* is indeed mutilated, since the first words of the text appear at the very end of the first line of the papyrus, with a lacuna of c. 13 letters before them, leaving enough space for at least a few words and suggesting that one or more columns of text preceded the actual fragment. This view, however, has been challenged recently by John Lundon<sup>23</sup> in relation with his reedition of the Cologne papyrus. In his admirably clear and balanced reconsideration of the question, Lundon points to the fact that the initial lacuna on the papyrus may have contained a short title of the *Life* (such as the name of Julius Caesar), an argument which is perfectly plausible especially if the *Lives* circulated individually, as suggested above, and which would account for the striking fact that the first words of the *Caesar* as known from the manuscript tradition should

<sup>20</sup> Indelli discusses all Plutarch papyri known up to 1995: P.Köln 13.499 (without the new fragments), P.Heid. 1.209, P.Oxy. 52.3684 and 3685, and P.Ant. 2.85 + 3.213, while Fernández Delgado deals with those published between 1995 and 2011: PSI 16.1608 (without the new fragments), P.Laur.inv. III/543A, P.Harrauer 1, and PSI 16.1607. Brusuelas and Parsons, in *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, vol. 78, 2012: 90, summarise the information given with greater detail for each individual papyrus among P.Oxy. 5153–58. The variants of P.Oxy. 81.5270–5271 and 82.5301 (including one major omission) are discussed in their respective *editio princeps*.

<sup>21</sup> Pelling (2011: 129–132).

<sup>22</sup> Duff (2011: 214 and 268–270).

<sup>23</sup> Lundon (2013).

occur precisely in the very first line of the papyrus. The weakness of this argument, as Lundon himself admits, is the fact that not a single instance of such a title embedded within the first line of a text has been found on any papyrus so far. Lundon, however, pleads for a “special situation” here, as the missing title would not be that of the entire work (i.e. the *Alexander-Caesar* pair as a whole), but only of its second part. His conclusion is that “the evidence provided by the papyrus is, therefore, ... ambivalent and can be adduced for or against the one view or the other”, but his own personal conviction is that “a ‘title’ more likely once stood in the gap than the text and that the *Caesar* may well be intact”.<sup>24</sup> The lack of bibliological evidence for such embedded titles makes it hard to follow Lundon’s arguments entirely, but one should at least admit that the question remains open and that the papyrus does not prove decisively that the beginning of the *Life of Caesar* is actually lost.

To sum up, the papyri yield valuable information on the transmission and reception of Plutarch’s works. They predate our earliest extant manuscripts by several centuries and are thus key witnesses to the textual tradition. Furthermore, they suggest that the *Parallel lives* circulated individually and not as pairs. More importantly, they testify to the early circulation of Plutarch’s works within the Roman Empire. Some of them might be as early as Plutarch’s own lifetime or shortly afterwards and thus constitute our earliest direct attestations of Plutarch’s works. Besides, all papyri but two belonged to editions of good to high quality and bear witness to the high regard in which Plutarch’s works were held. The fact that they circulated in Egypt so shortly after his death testifies to Plutarch’s early fame and confirms the major, immediate and universal impact of his tremendous oeuvre.

### Plutarch on Papyrus – Full List

All seventeen Plutarch papyri known to this day are listed here in chronological order, together with the relevant information about each papyrus, references to their (first) editions, plates, and further bibliography.

The list includes the reference numbers of the following papyrological databases or publications:

LDAB = *Leuven Database of Ancient Books*, by Willy Clarysse, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven:

<http://www.trismegistos.org/ldab/index.php> (last accessed 4 March 2019)

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<sup>24</sup> Lundon (2013: 110).

N.B.: the indication TM (in brackets) refers to the overall ID number in the Trismegistos database, of which the LDAB is one component.

Mertens-Pack<sup>3</sup> = *Mertens-Pack<sup>3</sup> Online Database*, by Marie-Hélène Marganne, Université de Liège:

<http://promethee.philo.ulg.ac.be/cedopal/index.htm> (last accessed 4 March 2019)  
 'Indelli' refers to the pages of Indelli (1995).

'Fernández Delgado' refers to the pages of Fernández Delgado (2013).

'Schmidt' refers to the pages of Schmidt (2013).

For all other papyrological abbreviations, please consult:

John F. Oates, Roger S. Bagnall, Sarah J. Clackson, Alexandra A. O'Brien, Joshua D. Sosin, Terry G. Wilfong, and Klaas A. Worp, *Checklist of Greek, Latin, Demotic and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca and Tablets*.

<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/papyrus/texts/clist.html> (last accessed 4 March 2019)

**P.Oxy. 52.3685**

*Septem sapientium convivium 12 (155C)*

Date	2nd c. (first half?)
Material	papyrus (verso: blank)
Format	roll; estimated length: 7.15m
Provenance	Oxyrhynchus
Inventory	Oxford, Sackler Library
LDAB	3841 (TM 62655)
Mertens-Pack <sup>3</sup>	01431.100
Indelli	56–57
Fernández Delgado	–
Editio princeps	<i>The Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i> , vol. 52, ed. by H.M. Cockle, London 1984: 119–121.

Photo

Schmidt: 401, pl. 1

[http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/papyri/the\\_papyri.html](http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/papyri/the_papyri.html) (last accessed 4 March 2019)

**PSI 16.1607**

*De cohibenda ira 1 (452F)*

Date	2nd c. (first half?)
Material	papyrus (verso: blank)
Format	roll; length estimation impossible
Provenance	unknown
Inventory	Florence, Istituto Papirologico "G. Vitelli", inv. 565

LDAB	10254 (TM 68984)
Mertens-Pack <sup>3</sup>	01432.001
Indelli	—
Fernández Delgado	138–9
Editio princeps	Lundon, J. 2004. 'A New Fragment of Plutarch ( <i>De cohibenda ira</i> 452F)', <i>ZPE</i> 147: 45–50. Reedited as PSI 16.1607 (J. Lundon).

Photo ed. princ.: 48; PSI 16, tavola xv; Schmidt: 401, pl. 2

**P.Oxy. 78.5153** *De profectibus in virtute* 1 (75A–C)

Date	2nd c.
Material	papyrus (verso: blank)
Format	roll; estimated length: 4.8m
Provenance	Oxyrhynchus
Inventory	Oxford, Sackler Library
LDAB	171899 (TM 171899)
Mertens-Pack <sup>3</sup>	01431.010
Indelli	—
Fernández Delgado	—
Editio princeps	<i>The Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i> , vol. 78, ed. by P.J. Parsons and W.B. Henry, London 2012: 91–92.

Photo ed. princ., pl. IV

[http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/papyri/the\\_papyri.html](http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/papyri/the_papyri.html) (last accessed 4 March 2019)

**PSI 16.1608** *Quaestiones convivales* 4.1 (660C–D, 661B–D, 662A–B, 671A–D)

**P.Oxy. 28.2481,**  
fr. 6–7  
**P.Oxy. 78.5156**

Date	2nd c.
Material	papyrus (verso: blank)
Format	roll; length estimation impossible
Provenance	Oxyrhynchus
Inventory	Florence, Istituto Papirologico "G. Vitelli", inv. 1960, 1995 and 2055 a+b; Oxford, Sackler Library
LDAB	3838 (TM 62652)
Mertens-Pack <sup>3</sup>	01431.110

Indelli	—
Fernández Delgado	134–5 (PSI inv. 2055)
Editio princeps	Andorlini, I. 1996, ‘Un nuovo papiro di Plutarco (PSI inv. 2055: « Quaest. Conv. » IV)’, in: ΟΔΟΙ ΔΙΖΗΣΙΟΣ – <i>Le vie della ricerca. Studi in onore di F. Adorno</i> , a cura di M. Serena Funghi. Florence: Olschki, 3–10. Reedited as PSI 16.1608 (by D. Muratore-S. Perrone) together with two new fragments (PSI inv. 1960 and 1995) and with the Oxford fragments (see below). P.Oxy. 28.2481 fr. 6–7 (originally edited as Hesiodic fragments) were identified as Plutarchan fragments belonging to the same roll as the above Florentine papyri by Danbeck (2013: 33–34). P.Oxy. 78.5156 (ed. J.H. Brusuelas) has two more fragments from the same roll.
Bibliography	Brusuelas, J. and Meccariello, C. 2015. ‘Plutarch’s Sympotic Forge and a Variant Reading in P.Oxy. LXXVIII 5156’, <i>AfP</i> 61: 37–52.
Photo	ed. princ.: 10; PSI 16, tavola XVI; P.Oxy. 78, pl. 1; Schmidt: 402, pl. 3 (PSI inv. 2055 a+b) <a href="http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/papyri/the_papyri.html">http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/papyri/the_papyri.html</a> (2481 and 5156) (last accessed 4 March 2019)

**P.Laur.inv. III/543A    *Quaestiones convivales* 7.10 (715D)**

Date	2nd c.
Material	papyrus (verso: blank)
Format	roll; length estimation impossible
Provenance	Oxyrhynchus (uncertain)
Inventory	Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana
LDAB	3839 (TM 62653)
Mertens-Pack <sup>3</sup>	01431.120
Indelli	—
Fernández Delgado	135–6
Editio princeps	Messeri Savorelli and G.-Pintaudi, R. 1997. ‘Frammenti di rotoli letterari Laurenziani: 5. Plutarchus, <i>Quaest. conv. VII, 10</i> (715D 1–4)’, <i>ZPE</i> 115: 174–177.
Photo	ed. princ. Tafel III.4; Schmidt: 402, pl. 4

P.Oxy. 78.5157

*Quaestiones convivales* 8.9 (732E–F)

Date	2nd c.
Material	papyrus (verso: blank)
Format	roll; length estimation impossible
Provenance	Oxyrhynchus
Inventory	Oxford, Sackler Library
LDAB	171902 (TM 171902)
Mertens-Pack <sup>3</sup>	01431.130
Indelli	—
Fernández Delgado	—
Editio princeps	<i>The Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i> , vol. 78, ed. by J.H. Brusuelas, London 2012: 98–99.

Photo                    ed. princ., pl. IV  
[http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/papyri/the\\_papyri.html](http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/papyri/the_papyri.html) (last accessed 4 March 2019)

P.Köln 13.499	<i>Caesar</i> , 1.1–6
P.Gen. inv. 272a+b	<i>Caesar</i> , 33.6–34.1, 34.8–35.1, 59.2–3, 59.6–60.1, 60.3–4, 60.7–8, 61.3–5, 61.8–9
P.Gen. inv. 504	<i>Caesar</i> , 39.6–7
P.Gen. inv. 477	<i>Caesar</i> , 59.6

Date	2nd / 3rd c.
Material	papyrus (verso: blank)
Format	roll; estimated length: 12m
Provenance	unknown
Inventory	Köln, Papyrussammlung P. 905 Durham (North Carolina), Duke University Genève, Bibliothèque de Genève
LDAB	3842 (TM 62656)
Mertens-Pack <sup>3</sup>	01431.000
Indelli	49–54 (in part)
Fernández Delgado	—
Editio princeps	P.Gen. inv. 272a+b = Martin, V. 1951. ‘Un papyrus de Plutarque’, <i>Aegyptus</i> 31: 138–147. P.Gen. inv. 477 and 504 = Schmidt, T. et al., 2013. ‘Nouveaux fragments d’un papyrus de la <i>Vie de César</i> de Plutarque ( <i>P.Gen. inv. 477 et 504</i> )’, <i>MH</i> 70: 10–15.

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P.Köln 1.47 = *Kölner Papyri*, vol. 1, ed. B. Kramer and R. Hübner, Opladen, 1976: 104–105; reedited as P.Köln 13.499 (together with P.Duk. inv. 773) by J. Lundon; Willis, W.H. 1988. ‘Two Philosophical Texts in the Robinson Collection’, in *Proceedings of the XVIIth International Congress of Papyrology*, Athens, vol. 2: 33 (description of P.Duk. inv. 773); Hombert, M. 1953, review of Martin’s *ed. princ.*, in *Chronique d’Égypte* 28: 155; Lundon, J. 2013. ‘P.Köln XIII 499 and the (In)Completeness of Plutarch’s Caesar’, *ZPE* 185: 107–110.

## Photos

P.Köln XIII, Tafel 11; *MH* 70 (2013): 14–5 (P.Gen. inv. 477 and 504); Schmidt: 403–5, pl. 5a–b–c (P.Köln 1.47 + P.Gen.inv. 272a+b)

[www.uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/ifa/NRWakademie/papyrologie/PKoeln/PK905ar.jpg](http://www.uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/ifa/NRWakademie/papyrologie/PKoeln/PK905ar.jpg)

[www.uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/ifa/NRWakademie/papyrologie/PKoeln/PK905br.jpg](http://www.uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/ifa/NRWakademie/papyrologie/PKoeln/PK905br.jpg)

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[www.ville-ge.ch/musinfo/bd/bge/papyrus](http://www.ville-ge.ch/musinfo/bd/bge/papyrus) (s.v. catalogue/Plutarque) (last accessed 4 March 2019)

**P.Heid. 1.209*****Pelopidas* 7.1–5**

## Date

c. 180

## Material

papyrus (verso: blank)

## Format

roll; estimated length: 11.7m

## Provenance

unknown

## Inventory

Heidelberg, Institut für Papyrologie, P. Gr. inv. 51

## LDAB

3840 (TM 62654)

Mertens-Pack<sup>3</sup>

01430.000

## Indelli

54–6

## Fernández Delgado

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## Editio princeps

*Literarische griechische Texte der Heidelberger Papyrus-sammlung*, ed. E. Siegmann, Heidelberg 1956: 88–90.

N.B.: former name of papyrus = P.Heid.Siegmann 209

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Photo ed. princ. Tafel 12f; Schmidt: 406, pl. 6  
[www.rzuser.uni-heidelberg.de/~gvo/Papyri/P.Heid.\\_I/209/P.Heid.\\_I\\_209.html](http://www.rzuser.uni-heidelberg.de/~gvo/Papyri/P.Heid._I/209/P.Heid._I_209.html)  
 (last accessed 4 March 2019)

**P.Oxy. 81.5270      *Caesar* 45.8–46.1**

Date	late 2nd / early 3rd c.
Material	papyrus (verso: blank)
Format	roll; length estimation impossible
Provenance	Oxyrhynchus
Inventory	Oxford, Sackler Library
LDAB	704635 (TM 704635)
Mertens-Pack <sup>3</sup>	01431.140
Indelli	–
Fernández Delgado	–
Editio princeps	<i>The Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i> , vol. 81, ed. by J.H. Brusuelas, London 2016: 64–67.

Photo  
[http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/papyri/the\\_papyri.html](http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/papyri/the_papyri.html) (to be added)  
 (last accessed 4 March 2019)

**P.Oxy. 81.5271      *Proverbia Alexandrinorum* 50 (?)**

Date	3rd c.
Material	papyrus (recto: account)
Format	roll; length estimation impossible
Provenance	Oxyrhynchus
Inventory	Oxford, Sackler Library
LDAB	yet to be assigned
Mertens-Pack <sup>3</sup>	yet to be assigned
Indelli	–
Fernández Delgado	–
Editio princeps	<i>The Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i> , vol. 81, ed. by J.H. Brusuelas, C. Meccariello and G. Verhasselt, London 2016: 67–70.

Photo ed. princ., pl. IV  
[http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/papyri/the\\_papyri.html](http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/papyri/the_papyri.html) (to be added)  
 (last accessed 4 March 2019)

**P.Oxy. 82.5301 Alexander 42.8–10, 43.3**

Date	3rd c.
Material	papyrus (recto: unidentified literary text)
Format	roll; length estimation impossible
Provenance	Oxyrhynchus
Inventory	Oxford, Sackler Library
LDAB	702427 (TM 702427)
Mertens-Pack <sup>3</sup>	01429.010
Indelli	—
Fernández Delgado	—
Editio princeps	<i>The Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i> , vol. 82, ed. by S. Slattery, London 2016: 39–41.

Photo ed. princ., frontispiece  
[http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/papyri/the\\_papyri.html](http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/papyri/the_papyri.html) (to be added)  
 (last accessed 4 March 2019)

**P.Oxy. 52.3684 Lycurgus 31.7–8**

Date	3rd c.
Material	papyrus (verso: blank)
Format	roll; estimated length: 7.5m
Provenance	Oxyrhynchus
Inventory	Oxford, Sackler Library
LDAB	3843 (TM 62657)
Mertens-Pack <sup>3</sup>	01429.100
Indelli	56
Fernández Delgado	—
Editio princeps	<i>The Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i> , vol. 52, ed. by H.M. Cockle, London 1984: 116–118.

Photo Schmidt: 407, pl. 7  
[http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/papyri/the\\_papyri.html](http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/papyri/the_papyri.html) (last accessed 4 March 2019)

P.Oxy. 78.5154

*Coniugalia praecepta 14–20 (139E–140D)*

Date	3rd c.
Material	papyrus (verso: blank)
Format	roll; estimated length: 3m
Provenance	Oxyrhynchus
Inventory	Oxford, Sackler Library
LDAB	171900 (TM 171900)
Mertens-Pack <sup>3</sup>	01431.020
Indelli	—
Fernández Delgado	—
Editio princeps	<i>The Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i> , vol. 78, ed. by P.J. Parsons and W.B. Henry, London 2012: 92–94.
Photo	<a href="http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/papyri/the_papyri.html">http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/papyri/the_papyri.html</a> (last accessed 4 March 2019)

P.Ant. 2.85 + 3.213

*De placitis philosophorum, Books 2–5 (passim 890E–909D)*

Date	3rd c.
Material	papyrus
Format	codex
Provenance	Antinoopolis
Inventory	Oxford, Sackler Library
LDAB	3861 (TM 62673)
Mertens-Pack <sup>3</sup>	01432.000
Indelli	49 (mention)
Fernández Delgado	—
Editio princeps	<i>The Antinoopolis Papyri</i> , vol. 2, ed. by J.W.B. Barns and H. Zilliacus, London 1960: 74–83. <i>The Antinoopolis Papyri</i> , vol. 3, ed. by J.W.B. Barns and H. Zilliacus, London 1967: 181–182.

Photo

P.Ant. 2, pl. iv (fr. 5); Schmidt: 408–409, pl. 8a+b.

P.Oxy. 78.5158

*De sollertia animalium 14–20 (963D)*

Date	3rd c.
Material	papyrus (verso: blank)

Format	roll; estimated length: 3m
Provenance	Oxyrhynchus
Inventory	Oxford, Sackler Library
LDAB	171903 (TM 171903)
Mertens-Pack <sup>3</sup>	01432.020
Indelli	—
Fernández Delgado	—
Editio princeps	<i>The Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i> , vol. 78, ed. by J.H. Brusuelas and W.B. Henry, London 2012: 99–100.

## Photo

[http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/papyri/the\\_papyri.html](http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/papyri/the_papyri.html) (last accessed 4 March 2019)

**P.Oxy. 78.5155      *Regum et imperatorum apophthegmata 14–20 (191E–F)***

Date	3rd / 4th c.
Material	papyrus (verso: blank)
Format	roll; estimated length: 12.5m
Provenance	Oxyrhynchus
Inventory	Oxford, Sackler Library
LDAB	171901 (TM 171901)
Mertens-Pack <sup>3</sup>	01431.101
Indelli	—
Fernández Delgado	—
Editio princeps	<i>The Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i> , vol. 78, ed. by P.J. Parsons and W.B. Henry, London 2012: 95–97.

## Photo

[http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/papyri/the\\_papyri.html](http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/papyri/the_papyri.html) (last accessed 4 March 2019)

**P.Harrauer 1      *De cohibenda ira 31 (456F–457B)***

Date	5th c.
Material	parchment
Format	codex
Provenance	unknown
Inventory	Wien, Papyrussammlung Nationalbibliothek, G. 03092 pap.

LDAB	8887 (TM 67584)
Mertens-Pack <sup>3</sup>	01432.010
Indelli	—
Fernández Delgado	136–8
Editio princeps	<i>Wiener Papyri als Festgabe zum 60. Geburtstag von Hermann Harrauer</i> , ed. B. Palme, Wien 2001: 1–6 (“I. Plutarco, <i>De cohibenda ira</i> 456F–457B”, ed. M. Serena Funghi).
Photo	ed. princ. Tafel 1; Schmidt: 410, pl. 9
www.onb.ac.at/sammlungen/papyrus/papyrus_bestandsrecherche.htm	(s.v. “Plutarch”) (last accessed 4 March 2019)

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## **PART 2**

### *Late Antiquity and Byzantium*

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# Plutarch and Early Christian Theologians

*Arkadiy Avdokhin*

## 1 Plutarch the “Pagan”, Early Christians, and Methodologies of Studying “Reception”

Academic perspectives on the dynamics between early Christianity and the classical culture have been going through a dramatic change in the last decades.<sup>1</sup> The major development in how scholars conceive of early Christians vis-à-vis the Hellenic (or “pagan”) cultural heritage has been the constantly growing realisation that the watershed between the two was at least not as neat as pictured before.<sup>2</sup> Scholars are increasingly aware of how much early Christian rhetoric itself informed in crucial ways the academic discourse on Christianity, while the other voices – those of the “last pagans” – are effectively absent from the historical record. In this revised perspective, where “Christianity” and “Hellenism” are no longer two opposite poles but parts of larger cultural developments of late antiquity finding themselves in complex interaction and making mutual impacts, the questions of reception of ancient authors are also tackled with an enhanced emphasis on creative re-working and appropriation, rather than religiously driven intolerance and forced oblivion.<sup>3</sup>

In what follows, I will discuss three strands in the complex interaction of early Christian theologians with Plutarch’s writings. Proceeding from the instances of polemical attacks on pagan religious thinking in Plutarch on to patterns of positive engagement with his legacy, I will emphasise how much Plutarch was an essential part of the literary and philosophical culture which Christians shared with non-Christians in late antiquity. My focus will be

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1 The results of the project “Symbolic behavior in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period” carried out within the framework of the Basic Research Program at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE) in 2018 are presented in this work.

2 Unlike the earlier mainstream studies of Momigliano (1963), Jaeger (1969), Chuvin (1990), Trombley (1993–1994), the new scholarly perspective is critical of the concepts “paganism” and “Hellenic religion” as analytical tools; see e.g. Kahlos (2007), Cameron (2011), Boin (2014), Salzman-Sághy-Testa (2015). The role played by early Christian normative discourse in conjuring these up is highlighted in Rebillard (2012). I use these terms only by way of convention to avoid engaging in lengthy theoretical discussions here.

3 A recent collection of essays revisiting the “reception” of classical culture in early Christianity is Brakke-Jacobsen-Ulrich (2006).

mainly on the third and fourth centuries AD and on the instances of sustained and demonstrably deliberate use of Plutarch's writings by Christian theologians rather than on more general parallels and echoes of his works in early Christian discourse.<sup>4</sup>

## 2 Plutarch Attacked? Eusebios and the Hellenic Philosopher

Unlike Homer and Hesiod (as authors of authoritative accounts of pagan gods) or Plato (and other non-Christian philosophers), Plutarch did not feature among the authors attacked or ridiculed by early Christian apologists.<sup>5</sup> Change comes in the early fourth century AD, when Eusebios of Caesarea (c. 260–339/340 AD) engages with Plutarch's writings in an informed but also critical manner (see also Morlet in this volume).<sup>6</sup> His *Preparation for the gospel* (henceforth *Preparation*), a massive narrative which lavishly expands on the idea of how ancient history, particularly religious, prefigured the triumph of Christianity under the emperor Constantine I,<sup>7</sup> offers an illuminating variety of contexts where Plutarch's discussion of the Hellenic religion is differentially appropriated.<sup>8</sup>

The opening chapters of Book 3 of the *Preparation* transmit large parts of Plutarch's *On the festival of images at Plataea*.<sup>9</sup> The quotations from the treatise preserved by Eusebios offer an extended discussion of the "natural science" aspect of gods (*physiologia*) – sex life, marriages, and births of Greek divinities, most centrally of Hera and Zeus. Eusebios seeks to undermine the allegoric readings of these naturalistic "myths" offered in Plutarch. Rounding off the

<sup>4</sup> This is the core of the methodology in Betz (1975) and (1978), which look at Christian authors of the second and third centuries AD, as well as the New Testament, on which see also Almqvist (1946). La Matina (1998) is a useful review with a wider scope and more generous focus. Bouton-Touboulic (2005) is a selective yet interesting discussion of the echoes of the *Moralia* in Christian authors of the fourth and fifth centuries AD.

<sup>5</sup> Recent general studies of Christian apologetics include Edwards-Goodman-Price (1999) and Engberg-Jacobsen-Ulrich (2014). Justin Martyr (c. 100–165 AD) famously detracted the Platonic teaching on the soul in his *Dialogue with Trypho*; the classic commentary is Van Winden (1971), see also van der Horst (1998). Prominent Greek philosophers were jointly attacked by Tatian (120–173 AD) in his *Oration to the Greeks* 2–3 and 19.

<sup>6</sup> Plutarch's absence in Christian authors before Eusebios is well discussed in Morlet (2005).

<sup>7</sup> On the *Preparation for the gospel*, see the recent Johnson (2006) and Inowlocki (2012) (with further bibliography).

<sup>8</sup> All cases of Eusebios' use of Plutarch are briefly outlined in Carricker (2003: 112–115).

<sup>9</sup> Plutarch's text (fr. 157 Sandbach) survives only in Eusebios' account in PE 3.1. 1–6. See Dübner (1855: 17–20) and Sandbach (1987: 282–295) for commentary.

section, Eusebios makes a point of distancing “our (i.e. Christian) view” from the impious fantasies: “This is what Plutarch says; and we learn from the statements which he sets before us, that even the wonderful and secret physiology (*aporrhētos physiologia*) of the Greek theology conveyed nothing divine, nor anything great and worthy of deity, and deserving of attention”.<sup>10</sup>

Eusebios goes on to denounce Hera’s, as well other gods’, entangled love life as an outrageous impiety most unbecoming to a goddess, which had been a well-established line of attack on the Hellenic religion in early Christian apologists writing in the philosophical tradition of the rational critique of religion:<sup>11</sup> “The original indecency of the legends, and the physiological explanation, which is thought to be more respectable, led not up to any heavenly, intellectual, and divine powers, nor yet to rational and incorporeal essences, but the explanation itself led down again to drunkenness, and marriage feasts, and human passions”.<sup>12</sup> In these passages, Eusebios comes across as an author deeply entrenched in the apologetic Christian tradition of militant anti-pagan rhetoric, who introduces Plutarch as if only to dismiss him in contempt.<sup>13</sup>

There is substantially more, however, to Eusebios’ knowledge and usage of Plutarch than the blanket and clichéd criticism of the sexual incontinence of pagan gods. An influential ideologist of early Christian triumphalism hugely invested in the rhetoric of emphatic denouncement of paganism both in cult and thought,<sup>14</sup> Eusebios also has a fundamentally different aspect of how he approaches Plutarch. This other pattern manifests itself in Eusebios’ intricate re-use of Plutarch’s account of the “death of Pan”, which he reconfigures as an element of his overarching narrative of the dramatic decline of the pagan religion with the advent of Christianity.

Eusebios’ narrative is based on an episode from Plutarch’s *On the obsolescence of oracles* relating the death of Pan (a smaller Greek divinity) as well as the emperor Tiberius’ reaction to the ominous event.<sup>15</sup> As such, this account of the death of a divine being is unparalleled in the Greek tradition. Plutarch frames the episode within his learned discussion of the nature and status of “demons” (*daimones*) as intermediary beings who share certain features of mortals. It serves to illustrate Plutarch’s point that demons can be susceptible to death.

<sup>10</sup> Eus. *PE* 3.1. Trans. Gifford (1903: 74).

<sup>11</sup> Attridge (1978). Among the classical *loci* of apologists’ attack on the sexual immorality of pagan gods is Tatian *Orat.* 22 or Athenagoras *Leg.* 34.

<sup>12</sup> Eus. *PE* 3.1. Trans. Gifford (1903: 74).

<sup>13</sup> On Eusebios’ use of Plutarch in apologetic contexts, see Morlet (2005).

<sup>14</sup> On Eusebios’ rhetoric of Christian triumphalism over paganism, see e.g. Kofsky (2000).

<sup>15</sup> *De def. or.* 11. See Borgeaud (1983) on this episode.

Eusebios turns the message of Plutarch's account into a sweeping proclamation of the cessation of all pagan cults by way of a drastic interpretative *tour de force*. The ideological overhaul he performs hinges on the wordplay on the name of the deity. The proper name *Pan* is reinterpreted as *pan* ("all" in Greek),<sup>16</sup> and the entire narrative becomes a catastrophic "prophecy" proclaimed by paganism on its own religion. The news which Eusebios has the emperor Tiberius face is therefore the one of a wholesale extinction of non-Christian gods:

It is in the time of Tiberius, an age about which it is written that our Saviour, living among men, drove far from the lives of men all (*pan*). This to the extent that certain demons threw themselves at his knees, supplicating him not to deliver them into Tartarus.<sup>17</sup>

Framed in this way, Plutarch's account, it would seem, taps into Eusebios' discourse of Christian triumphalism and the conclusive defeat of the pagan religion. But even put within this rhetorical and ideological context, Plutarch is still *not* targeted as a pagan author deserving personal condemnation. Rather, in constructing his anti-pagan rhetoric, Eusebios draws on Plutarch as an authoritative theorist of Hellenic cults. Most importantly, Eusebios' sentiment in this episode is demonstrably derivative from Plutarch's. His *On the obsolescence of oracles* is rich in pessimistic nostalgia about the forms of cult slipping into oblivion. Plutarch's nostalgic pessimism, acknowledged and appreciated by Eusebios, is arguably behind his own anti-pagan version of the episode of Pan's death. Both aspects of Eusebios' engagement with Plutarch's work ultimately suggest a deep immersion into the philosopher's writings enabling the subtle reversion of the original emphases, which accounts for the Christian author's ability to locate and fine-tune an episode so that it supports his agenda.

### 3      Plutarch Appreciated: Christian Intellectuals Reading the *On the Soul*

Eusebios' eager, although purportedly critical, engagement with Plutarch's theological writing is a good juncture to move on to further discussion of the literary patterns in early Christian philosophers' reading of Plutarch. Equally casual, but totally devoid of any trace of criticism, are the instances of literary

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<sup>16</sup> This wordplay is indeed traditional, originating in Pl. *Cra.* 408c–d and also surfacing in, e.g., *H. Pan.* 19.47 and *Orph. H.* 11.1; see Borgeaud (1983: 266, n. 40).

<sup>17</sup> Eus. *PE* 5.18.13. Trans. Gifford (1903: 262).

reliance on Plutarch's *On the soul* by a number of prominent early Christian thinkers, as I discuss below.

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–before 215 AD) in his profoundly theological and thoroughly biblical *Elogues from prophetic writings* borrows a description of the blessed and purified souls from Plutarch's *On the soul* citing it verbatim:<sup>18</sup>

But after this a marvellous light meets the wanderer, and open country and meadow lands welcome him; and in that place there are voices and dancing and the solemn majesty of sacred music and holy visions. And amidst these, he walks at large in new freedom, now perfect and fully initiated, celebrating the sacred rites, a garland upon his head, and converses with pure and holy men.<sup>19</sup>

Remarkably, *On the soul* is also a text which Eusebios knows and quotes in another episode of the *Preparation*, where he uses Plutarch's discussion of overcoming terminal illnesses to foreground his own discussion of Jewish views on resurrection.<sup>20</sup> As both Clement and Eusebios clearly belong among highly educated Christian philosophers who composed works to high literary standards, Plutarch's *On the soul* admittedly was on the list of staple philosophical reading of the educated elite among Christians. This also fits squarely with what is known about Plutarch's overall standing in Eusebios' library, which provides an enlightening glimpse into the intellectual horizons of the educated Christian writers of the third and early fourth centuries AD.<sup>21</sup> Origen, another prominent theologian from the milieu of early Christian intellectuals, valued Plutarch's *On the soul* as well and even seems to have brought a manuscript of it to the library of Caesarea in the third century AD.<sup>22</sup>

Authors like Clement of Alexandria would casually (but all the more tellingly) accept Plutarch's authority and follow him closely. Eusebios performed smooth gear-shifting from fulminating about Plutarch's impious "divine physiology" to relying on him as a readily acceptable, tried and true authority in mythological lore and hinged his own Christian argument on re-framed ideas from Plutarch's works. The three Christian theologians with a vivid literary interest in *On the soul* – Clement, Eusebios, and Origen – share the fundamental

<sup>18</sup> See James (1900) with further references.

<sup>19</sup> Clem. *Ecl.* 34 = Plu. fr. 178 Sandbach (1969: 318). Trans. Sandbach (1969: 319).

<sup>20</sup> Eus. *PE* 11.36.1 – see Carriker (2003: 114).

<sup>21</sup> Carriker (2003).

<sup>22</sup> Carriker (2003: 113).

recognition that Plutarch belongs among the “must-reads” for late antique philosophically-minded intellectuals, whatever their religious persuasions.

#### 4 Plutarch and the Age of Christianisation: Basil of Caesarea and the Quest for Christian *Paideia*

Late antique educated intellectuals, and the cultural matrices they lived in, which would cut across boundaries of religions, bring my discussion to the next context in which to locate Plutarch’s afterlife in early Christian theologians. In this section, I will address the issues of Christianisation of education, the dramatic changes in late antique culture and religion as their backdrop, and the surprising role Plutarch happened to play in them.

As Christian theorists of culture struggled to work out what a distinctively Christian education and literary culture should be like (while developments on the ground could be somewhat different from their ideas),<sup>23</sup> Plutarch’s secured place in the minds of the Christian intellectuals made itself potently felt in one of the most emblematic discussions of the role of classical *paideia*<sup>24</sup> in the Christian project – the *Address to young men on the right use of Greek literature* (henceforth *Address*) by Basil of Caesarea (c. 329–379 AD).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> In the fourth and early fifth century AD, theorising on a properly Christian education ranged widely. Stemming from the misgivings about pagan education voiced by many early apologists, the more rigorist discourse would be to stress the dangers of exposing youth to the “Hellenic” literary culture. High points of this discourse include Athanasius of Alexandria’s (295–373 AD) subtle yet influential rhetoric against the “Hellenic” education in his *Life of Antony*, written c. 357 AD, see Rubenson (2003); or John Chrysostom’s (between 340 and 350–407 AD) *Address on vainglory* (c. 387–398 AD), where he elaborates a programme of exclusively Christian upbringing; see Laistner (1951). The other strand of the discussion was developed by the thinkers seeking to offer “Christianised” versions of traditional genres. Here belong the biblical paraphrases by, e.g., ps.-Apollinarious of Laodiceia (c. 310–c. 390 AD), see de Stefani (2008); and Nonnus, see Shorrock (2011); or Christians advocating explicitly the “Hellenic” literary culture, such as Gregory of Nazianzus (329/330–c. 390 AD) in some of his sermons, see Nimmo Smith (2001); and Synesios of Cyrene (c. 370–413 AD) in his *Dion*, see de Coul (2012). Key general studies of education in late antiquity are Marrou (1948), Morgan (1998), Cribiore (2001). A groundbreaking new synthesis is Agosti-Cecconi (2016).

<sup>24</sup> *Paideia*, i.e. literary education in the classical tradition and the awareness of cultural norms instilled through it, was a crucial element shaping the discourse of the educated elite (*pepaideumenoī*) shared by both Christians and non-Christians in late antiquity; see e.g. Limberis (2000), Van Hoof-Van Nuffelen (2015).

<sup>25</sup> Scholars have made much of Basil’s *Address* in the context of fourth-century cultural developments, so the bibliography is vast. Most central studies are Büttner (1908), Valgiglio (1975), Naldini (1984). The standard edition is Boulenger (1965).

Written shortly after 370 AD for Basil's nephew, the *Address* is a balanced and carefully wrought discussion of the benefits which a Christian youth can gain from reading ancient poets. The rhetoric of the *Address* is deftly orchestrated so that it is not immediately apparent what Basil's ultimate stance on the issue is. While making a case for the usefulness of classical poetry in the Christian education, Basil presents his argument as only a marginal adjustment to the perspective on Christian virtues as described in the Bible and by Christian rigorists. For Basil, these are definitely formative, and the classical literature may serve only as a stepping stone to mastering them.

Two of Plutarch's works loom particularly large behind Basil's rhetoric and style in the *Address*, while more minor allusions and dependences are also present. Basil's overall point is that reading Greek poets is still worthwhile, and the intellectual gain is bigger than the danger of exposure to pagan impieties. In building and presenting his argument, Basil follows quite closely the ideas and composition of Plutarch's *On reading the poets*. Besides, Basil relies on Plutarch's *On progress in virtue* for many tropes and images in his presentation.

*On reading the poets*, like Basil's *Address*, is a work that explicitly turns to the issues of literary education of an adolescent male, Cleander, and is addressed to his father, Marcus Sedatus.<sup>26</sup> Also fundamentally similar to the *Address* is the somewhat apologetic rhetoric of Plutarch's work: it seeks to defend the practice of reading poets from morally stringent attackers by pointing out how poetry can be culled for edifying examples. Plutarch underlines that learning ancient poets is not an end in itself. Rather, it serves to present to the young reader philosophical and moral ideas "mixed" with poetic fancy:

... poetry, by taking up its themes from philosophy and blending them with fable, renders the task of learning light and agreeable for the young. Wherefore poetry should not be avoided by those who are intending to pursue philosophy, but they should use poetry as an introductory exercise in philosophy (*prophilosophēton*), by training themselves habitually to seek the profitable in what gives pleasure.<sup>27</sup>

Basil reconfigures this argument and speaks of the eternal truths of the Scriptures as not directly comprehensible to the yet feeble-minded young minds, which can benefit from a mirror-image of them provided in secular literature. Apart from following Plutarch's general line of thinking about fiction and poetry as a path leading on to more proper and serious philosophy, Basil's

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<sup>26</sup> See the recent edition offering an authoritative discussion and full bibliography by Hunter-Russell (2011).

<sup>27</sup> Plu. *De aud. poet.* 15F–16A. Trans. Babbitt (1927: 81).

*Address* picks up on the trope of classical texts as an “exercise” that prepares the mind for a step up:

Into the life eternal the Holy Scriptures lead us, which teach us through divine words. But so long as our immaturity forbids our understanding their deep thought, we exercise (*progymnazometha*) our spiritual perceptions upon profane writings, which are not altogether different, and in which we perceive the truth as it were in shadows and in mirrors.<sup>28</sup>

Basil's reliance on Plutarch's *On reading the poets* in his *Address* runs farther than the structuring and framing of the argument and includes the style of writing as well. Among the many instances<sup>29</sup> is, for example, Basil's metaphor of branches and leafage for the “external (secular) wisdom” as superficial decoration concealing the essentially profitable message of a text.<sup>30</sup> The passage is modelled on Plutarch's image of the over-grown vine branch which can stand in the way to the “fruit” – the philosophically valid idea in the literary work.<sup>31</sup>

While falling back on Plutarch's conceptual framework, composition, and style, Basil revealingly fails to acknowledge the debt: the philosopher is never mentioned in the entire text of the *Address*. Indeed, when an apology for pagan classics was at stake, arguing by reference to a classical authority would indeed be a wrong move to make.

Still, in his effective reliance on Plutarch, Basil fundamentally follows the pattern already evident in how Clement, Origen, and Eusebios used his works. For them, Plutarch's writings had already been a natural element of their literary *paideia*, therefore passages, vocabulary, or insights into recondite mythography would easily spring to their minds whenever they were constructing a doctrinal, pastoral, or even anti-pagan discourse. Arguably, for Basil and his readers, the debt did not have to be acknowledged precisely because Plutarch was such a natural part of their conceptual and literary universe.

In Basil's *Address*, which purports to be an extended apology for classical *paideia*, Plutarch's role as a tacit but readily available source of conceptual and literary inspiration reaches its peak. While he is never introduced into the text for the reader to see him, Plutarch is a constant and formative presence behind Basil's thought and style.

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<sup>28</sup> Basil. *Leg. lib. gent.* 2. Trans. Padelford (1902: 103).

<sup>29</sup> The echoes are discussed in the studies referred to in n. 25.

<sup>30</sup> Bas. *Leg. lib. gent.* 3.6

<sup>31</sup> Plu. *De aud. poet.* 28E.

## 5 Philosophy in the Air: Plutarch as a Path from Middle Platonism to Christian Theological Discourse?

Apart from the fairly well-established sides of Plutarch's importance for early Christian theologians, there are wider aspects of his impact which are probable rather than certain. Plutarch's thinking about gods and their nature may have had a more general impact on the conceptual language used by certain early Christian philosophers.

On a wider (and admittedly somewhat abstract) scale, Plutarch may have been responsible for a dramatic shift of philosophical perspective in the originally Platonic teaching on the origin of the world which had far-reaching repercussions for early Christian theology.<sup>32</sup> Plato famously addresses the issue of intellectual (in)comprehensibility of the *demiourgos* ("creator") in his *Timaeus*: "It is a hard task to find the maker and father of this universe, and having found him it would be impossible to declare him to all mankind".<sup>33</sup> In his extensive commentary on this passage, Plutarch introduces a crucial shift of emphasis by suggesting that the "maker" and "father" refer to two different agencies, or actions, within the supreme god, which are responsible for the creation of the physical world and the "generation" of the human soul, respectively.<sup>34</sup> By the fourth century AD, this interpretation had arguably become an established element of the Christian theological discourse. For instance, Hilary of Poitiers (c. 310–c. 367 AD), who otherwise shows no special liking for, or knowledge of, the "Hellenic" philosophy (including Plato and Plutarch, for that matter), speaks of "the creator of the world and father of our soul"<sup>35</sup> in perfect keeping with the distinction made in Plutarch's commentary. It is quite probable that the re-interpretation of the Platonic passage, which came to be ingrained into early Christian theological language, derives from Plutarch's commentary.

Alongside this widely present (but equally hard to firmly grasp) emphasis within early Christian theology which may take its cue from Plutarch, more specific philosophical frameworks probably deriving from his writings surface in Christian writers of the early epoch. These are often tiny bits of philosophical discourse traceable to specific Plutarchan works which make their way into early Christian theology in a fossilised form. This host of occasional instances of possible presence of Plutarch's language and ideas in Christian theologians is hard to trace in its entirety, and this may be the reason why they have been

<sup>32</sup> See Whittaker (1981) for more details.

<sup>33</sup> Pl. *Tim.* 28c3ff. Trans. Whittaker (1981: 51).

<sup>34</sup> Plu. *Quaest. Plat.* 1000E–1001E.

<sup>35</sup> Hilary, *In Ps.* 64.4.

largely neglected by scholarship.<sup>36</sup> Still, the brief exposition below should illustrate that demonstrably in many cases these elements of philosophical language originate or take inspiration from Plutarch's works.

As has been suggested,<sup>37</sup> the discussion of the "colours of the soul", which is present in the Christian apocryphal *Acts of John* (second century AD),<sup>38</sup> is sparked by a passage in Plutarch's *On god's slowness to punish*. In this narrative, the apostle John describes God as a "painter of souls" and presents colours as mystically signifying a range of psychic states: "these are the colours which I tell you to paint with: faith in God, knowledge, reverence, kindness, fellowship, mildness, goodness, brotherly love, purity, sincerity, tranquillity, fearlessness, cheerfulness, dignity and the whole band of colors which portray your soul".<sup>39</sup>

This trope is arguably based on how souls in the afterlife are described by Thespesius in Plutarch's *On god's slowness to punish*, where the ethical values of the soul are explicitly linked to specific colours:

"(scil. I [Thespesius]) observed," he said, "in the souls that mixture and variety of colours: one is drab brown, the stain that comes of meanness and greed, another a fiery blood-red, which comes of cruelty and savagery; where you see the blue grey, some form of incontinence in pleasure has barely been rubbed out; while if spite and envy are present they give out this livid green."<sup>40</sup>

The mode of thinking whereby colours mystically represent psychic states and moral values is also found in other Christian texts, all written within a chronological span suggestively close to that of Plutarch's work and the *Acts of John*. In another early apocryphal narrative, the *Gospel of Philip* (c. second century AD), God's "true colours" rendering human souls immortal are mentioned.<sup>41</sup> Origen in his *Homily on genesis*, writing less than a century after Plutarch, also develops a similar trope.<sup>42</sup> Thinking in terms of "colours of soul", a referential frame which arguably derives from a passage in Plutarch, entered Christian literary discourse in an impressively short time.

<sup>36</sup> Betz (1975: 183).

<sup>37</sup> Gallarte (2012).

<sup>38</sup> The date and context of the *Acts of John* are discussed in Junod-Kaestli (1983).

<sup>39</sup> *AJ* 28.6–29.19. Trans. Schneemelcher (2003: 176).

<sup>40</sup> *Plu. De sera num. 565C–E.* Trans. de Lacy (1984: 281–283).

<sup>41</sup> *Gos. Phil.* 61.12–20, noted in Gallarte (2012: 244). For the dating of the apocryphon, see Ménard (1967).

<sup>42</sup> *Or. Hom. in Gen. 13*; see Gallarte (2012: 243).

Another revealing case of possible dynamics of interaction between Plutarch and Christian theological discourse is the conceptualisation of divinities as middle beings whose nature is “mixed” and features both divine (immortal) and human (mortal) elements. This poorly attested mode of philosophising about borderline cases between the human and the divine reaches its peak in the concept of Christ as possessing a combined – both divine and human *physis* (nature). As discussed above, Plutarch's views on demons in the *On the obsolescence of oracles* are suggestive in this regard.<sup>43</sup>

The most fascinating insight into Plutarch's language of demonology and its potential impact on early Christianity comes from a discourse on divine nature in the *On Isis and Osiris*. Building on the ideas of Xenocrates first developed in the fourth century BC,<sup>44</sup> Plutarch develops his concept of *daimones* (“demons”) as occupying an intermediary position between men and gods:

Better, therefore, is the judgement of those who hold that the stories about Typhon, Osiris, and Isis, are records of ... demigods, whom Plato and Pythagoras and Xenocrates and Chrysippus ... allege to have been stronger than men and ... greatly surpass our nature (*physis*), yet not possessing the divine quality unmixed (*amiges*) and uncontaminated (*akraton*).<sup>45</sup>

Significantly, the passage is among the ones which Eusebios cites and discusses.<sup>46</sup> Eusebios' engagement with Plutarch's vision of semi-divine figures in the *Preparation* may to a certain degree account for the influence of Plutarch's language of “mixed” divinity and humanity on the discourse about the “middle being” of the later Christian tradition, Christ itself. It is all the more possible given the high esteem in which subsequent writers held the *Preparation*.<sup>47</sup>

Both the conceptual frame and the peculiar aspects of Plutarch's philosophical language used when speaking about the demons' complex nature make a striking appearance in early Christian philosophers when they address

<sup>43</sup> Plu. *De def. or.* 416C: “There are certain entities which are in between gods and humans, who are susceptible to mortal passions”.

<sup>44</sup> Plutarch's demonology and its debt to Xenocrates are discussed in Soury (1942), Griffiths (1970: 25–33), Brenk (1977), Brenk (1986). Recent insights (and an up-to-date bibliography) are offered in Gasparini (2011).

<sup>45</sup> Plu. *Is. et Os.* 360D–E. Trans. Babbitt (1936: 59–60).

<sup>46</sup> Eus. *PE* 5.5.1.

<sup>47</sup> On the impact of Eusebios' *Preparation* on the later Christians' awareness of Plutarch, see Morlet (2005: 125 ff.).

Christ's "mixed" nature. This framework is shared across a variety of doctrinal emphases and a range of early theological sub-traditions.<sup>48</sup> In Cappadocian theologians, who by far represented the mainstream Christian thinking in the later fourth century AD, the conceptual language on the mixture of divine and human nature in Christ was well developed.<sup>49</sup> For instance, Gregory of Nyssa (335/340–after 394 AD) conceived of Christ's mixed nature in a language intriguingly reminiscent of Plutarch's in *On Isis and Osiris*:

Not two Christs are proclaimed, but one Christ and Lord is argued for, and [it is shown that] there is one divine nature mixed with the human one (*theia physis tēi anthrōpinēi michtheisa*) that maintained the features of both natures not confused (*asynchytous*).<sup>50</sup>

The Christian parallels to Plutarch's thinking about the creation of the world and soul generation, the conceptual language of the mixed nature of semi-divine middle beings, as well as the minor but illustrative instances like the "colours of soul" suggest that the philosopher was quite likely an important contributor to (if not originator of) a number of philosophical concepts and frames of thinking which are persistently present in early Christian writings. These were clearly "in the air" for Christian theologians to pick up and develop, although much remains to be done to clarify the relationship.

## 6 Conclusion

Plutarch, his ideas, patterns of literary idiom and composition, and frameworks of philosophical thinking contributed to the discourse of early Christian theologians in many significant ways. With equal ease, Christian writers would turn to Plutarch in order to refute his pagan religion, or rhetorically re-shape his narratives and concepts so that they would – to a Christian eye – disintegrate as 'pagan' folly. For early Christian thinkers and their audience, who would equally come from the educated elite among believers, Plutarch was an ideal pagan interlocutor: he could provide cues to build their arguments on, offer insights into pagan religion to be reliably refuted, or provide casual

<sup>48</sup> See e.g. Briggman (2013) for the language of mixture in Irenaeus (interpreted as reliance on Stoic tradition mainly) including a wider discussion as well.

<sup>49</sup> The mixture trope in the fourth century Greek theologians is discussed in Bouchet (1968), Daley (2002).

<sup>50</sup> Gr. Nyss. *Eun.* 5.5. My own translation.

inspiration for furnishing a Christian argument with a piece of recondite mythological lore. Besides, Plutarch's stamp on the late antique philosophical language taken over by early theologians is probably there to be further explored, as scholars embrace the productive exchange between the Christian and the Hellenic culture as eagerly as many early Christians themselves (for all their rhetoric) really did.

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## Plutarch in Christian Apologetics (Eusebios, Theodoretos, Cyril)

*Sébastien Morlet*

Eusebios of Caesarea (c. 260–339/340 AD) is the first Christian writer to quote a text by Plutarch.\*<sup>1</sup> Plutarch was used by the Christians from the time of Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215 AD), but the latter never mentions his name. Origen (c. 185–254 AD) also knew and used Plutarch, but mentions his name only once, in his *Against Celsus* (c. 248 AD), in a remark relating to Plutarch's *On the soul*:

Now, that miraculous appearances have sometimes been witnessed by human beings is related by the Greeks; and not only by those of them who might be suspected of composing fabulous narratives, but also by those who have given every evidence of being genuine philosophers, and of having related with perfect truth what had happened to them. Accounts of this kind we have read in the writings of Chrysippus of Soli, and also some things of the same kind in Pythagoras; as well as in some of the more recent writers who lived a very short time ago, as in the treatise of Plutarch of Chaeronea *On the soul*, and in the second book of the work of Numenius the Pythagorean *On the incorruptibility of the soul*. Now, when such accounts are related by the Greeks, and especially by the philosophers among them, they are not received with mockery and ridicule, nor regarded as fictions and fables.<sup>2</sup>

Origen is here suggesting a possible apologetic use of Plutarch, which would be widely developed by his spiritual pupil, Eusebios, though the possibility

\* This text is dedicated to the memory of Professor Françoise Frazier. In 2004, she invited me to write a paper on the reception of Plutarch in Eusebios' *Preparation for the gospel* for a workshop organised in Toulouse. She has remained a close friend and colleague ever since.

1 On the Christian reception of Plutarch in antiquity, see Whittaker (1981); La Matina (1988); Fernández Ardanaz (1993); Bonazzi (2000); Bouton-Touboulic (2005); Morlet (2005). Regarding the Christian reception of philosophy in general, see Morlet (2014).

2 *Contra Celsum* 5,5-57 (tr. F. Crombie).

remains that Origen already used Plutarch in this way in another lost work (see below).

## 1 Eusebios of Caesarea

Eusebios is a major figure of Christian antiquity.<sup>3</sup> Probably born and educated in Caesarea (Palestine), in the last years of the third century AD, he met there the priest Pamphilus, who was known to have been the pupil of Pierius, who had been himself one of Origen's students. Pamphilus was an admirer of Origen's thought and dedicated his life to collecting, copying, and editing the master's works. Pamphilus was also a teacher and probably had a crucial influence on Eusebios' theological and exegetical education.<sup>4</sup> In 303, the "Great Persecution" broke out. Pamphilus was arrested and put to death in 310. Eusebios escaped martyrdom and soon after the end of the persecution (313) he became bishop of Caesarea. We know almost nothing about his activity until the beginning of the Arian crisis, at the beginning of the 320s. Then, Eusebios set himself against Arius' opponents. He subscribed to the Nicaean creed (325) but dedicated the end of his life to the struggle against the adversaries of Arianism (Athanasius of Alexandria, Marcellus of Ancyra), though he was not himself an "Arian" strictly speaking. He seems to have been very close to the Emperor Constantine, whose counsellor he may have been occasionally.

Eusebios played a major role in the constitution of Christian literature. Although he is mostly famous as a historian, writer of the first *History of the church* and of the first preserved Christian Chronicle, he was also a biographer, a biblical scholar and a polemicist. He wrote a *Life of Pamphilus*, today lost, and an influential *Life of Constantine* after the death of the emperor in 337. He composed the first (partially but extensively) preserved commentaries on the Psalms and on Isaiah and he made several tools for the study of the Bible, such as the *Onomasticon* (a lexicon of the toponyms of the Old Testament) and the *Evangelical canons* (ten tables giving all the parallel passages in the gospels). As a polemicist, he wrote against the heresies, first in the tenth book of the *General elementary introduction*, now lost, and in the twofold work *Against Marcellus-Ecclesiastical theology*, intended against Marcellus' theology, which

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<sup>3</sup> On Eusebios, see Schwartz (1907); Wallace-Hadrill (1960); Sirinelli (1961); Moreau (1966); Barnes (1981); Attridge-Hata (1992); Perrone (1995); Fusco (1998); Johnson (2006a); Morlet (2009); Inowlocki-Zamagni (2011); Morlet (2012a).

<sup>4</sup> See Morlet (2011).

was, according to Eusebios, a kind of Sabellianism, that is, a theology which confused the persons of the Trinity.

But his main activity as a polemicist was devoted to the controversy with Judaism and Hellenism. His masterwork was the diptych *Preparation for the gospel* (*Praeparatio evangelica*) (15 books) – *Proof of the gospel* (*Demonstratio evangelica*) (20 books, but only the first ten preserved, with a few fragments from Book 15) later summarised in the *Theophany*, itself summarised in the so-called *Orations in praise of Constantine* (*Laudes Constantini*)<sup>5</sup> – in essence, two speeches artificially put together, of which the second one is a short apology of Christianity. In the *Praeparatio*, he intends to show why the Christians were right in leaving Hellenism for the traditions of the Hebrews. In the *Demonstratio*, he aims at showing that the Christians were right in leaving Judaism for a new form of piety, since Christ accomplished the Hebrew prophecies, and since the Jews are rejected by God.<sup>6</sup>

The *Praeparatio* – *Demonstratio* constitutes the longest apology of Christian antiquity.<sup>7</sup> It is the first work which intends to refute both the Greeks and the Jews. Eusebios designed it primarily as a work of teaching for the new converts (*PE* 1.1.12) or more generally for those who want to know “what Christianity is” (*PE* 1.1.1). The *Praeparatio* thus plays the role of a first instruction, designed for the beginners who still have to be convinced to leave Hellenism, whereas the *Demonstratio* is intended for the more advanced readers.

The apology has sometimes been considered as an answer to Porphyry’s writing *Against the Christians*, but recent research has shown that the importance of this text for Eusebios’ views has been exaggerated.<sup>8</sup> Eusebios’ answer to this text was his *Against Porphyry*,<sup>9</sup> if he actually wrote that work, which is now lost. The *Praeparatio-Demonstratio* was a reply to more conventional attacks and a general exposition of Christianity.

Quite clearly, Eusebios aimed at producing the most complete apology which ever existed. This project accounts for the length of the work and the number of proofs he tries to collect. Another striking feature of Eusebios’ literary technique, as in his way of writing history, is his constant use of quotations. Quotations from Greek authors were frequently used by previous apologists

<sup>5</sup> It has sometimes been thought that the *Orations* were summarised in the *Theophany*, but the other view now prevails.

<sup>6</sup> On Eusebios’ apologetic project, see Gallagher (1993); Frede (1999); Kofsky (2000); Johnson (2006a); Johnson (2006b); Jacobsen-Ulrich (2007); Morlet (2009); Inowlocki (2011).

<sup>7</sup> Text and trans. of the *Praeparatio*: Gifford (1903); Mras (1954–1955); Des Places *et al.* (1974–1991); Di Nola (2001).

<sup>8</sup> See Morlet (2011b).

<sup>9</sup> See Morlet (2012b).

as external authorities, helping them to sustain Christian doctrine. Eusebios can use the Greek testimonies in the same way, but a more original feature of his quotation technique consists in letting the Greeks explain their own doctrines.<sup>10</sup> The aim of such a technique is clearly to produce an indisputable exposition, made by those who are supposed to have the best knowledge of the point: "This statement is not ours, but the testimony comes from within, and from the Greeks themselves" (*PE* 1.9.14); "And let us say nothing of ourselves, but on all points make use of their own words, so that we may again learn their venerable secrets from themselves." (*PE* 3, Prol. 2). As a consequence, his quotations may sometimes be very long, and are generally far longer than his predecessors'. Another consequence is that Eusebios' voice is often confined to commenting the quotations or making the necessary transitions.

The encyclopaedic ambition of the *Praeparatio* certainly accounts for the fact that Plutarch is frequently used by Eusebios for apologetic purposes: first, because Plutarch is often used by him as a *documentary source* on Greek theology or Greek philosophy; second, because he is also used by Eusebios as a *philosopher*. In both cases, he illustrates the *improvement* of Christian apologetics which Eusebios has in mind: *qualitative improvement* – exposition based on "authorised" sources – and *quantitative improvement* – demonstration against the Greeks based on *more* proofs than his predecessors. Thus, Plutarch is one of the few new authorities who appear for the first time in a defence of Christianity, together with Plotinus and Porphyry. Eusebios also aimed at producing an updated apology, based not only on the classical and Hellenistic authors, as was the case with the second century apologists, but also on the philosophers of the Imperial period.

The *Praeparatio* is divided into three main parts:

- a) Books 1 to 6 are an exposition and a refutation of pagan theologies according to the traditional tripartite division of theology (*theologia tripartita*): the theology of the poets (Book 1 and Book 2), the theology of the philosophers (Book 3), and the theology of the cities (Books 4 to 6).
- b) Books 7 to 9 are an exposition and a defence of the traditions of the Hebrews and of the Jews – Eusebios called "Hebrews" the just men mentioned in the Bible, who are, according to him, the Jews' ancestors.
- c) Books 10 to 15 are devoted to Greek philosophy. Eusebios shows the dependency of the Greeks on Scripture (Book 10). He illustrates the way Plato's philosophy, in his view, is inspired by the Bible (Book 11–first half of Book 13) and eventually shows the contradictions of the philosophers (second half of Book 13 to Book 15).

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<sup>10</sup> On Eusebios' quotation technique, see Des Places (1982); Carriker (2003); Inowlocki (2006).

Plutarch is used in the first and the third parts. With the exception of one text,<sup>11</sup> this division corresponds to the two kinds of texts he quotes: the works on religion, in the first part, and the philosophical works, in the third part. In any case, Eusebios only quotes the *Moralia* and never uses the *Lives*.<sup>12</sup> In the first category, Eusebios uses *On the Daedala at Plataea*, *On Isis and Osiris*, *On the obsolescence of oracles*, *On the 'E' at Delphi*. In the second category, he quotes from the treatise *On the soul* and from two of ps.-Plutarch's texts: the *Strōmata* and the *Opinions of the philosophers*. That means that the "real" Plutarch is used primarily in the first part of the *Praeparatio*. With that in mind, let us return to the two functions of Plutarch's quotations in the *Praeparatio*.

## 2 Plutarch as a Documentary Source

Plutarch is used by Eusebios as an informer on pagan religious creeds and practices, and on Greek philosophy. The Appendix gives all the references. In his denunciation of philosophical theology (Book 3), he uses his testimony to illustrate the allegorical interpretation of myths, which Eusebios seeks to refute (*On the Daedala at Plataea* = PE 3.1.1–7; *On Isis and Osiris* 363D = PE 3.3.11). He also uses him as an informer about ancient practices. His second quotation from *On the Daedala at Plataea* (PE 3.8.1–9), which says that the old statues of Plataea were made of wood, aims at contradicting Porphyry, who praises the use of gold and precious materials in the making of statues. Another quotation from *On Isis and Osiris* (PE 3.3.16), which is a description of the Egyptian gods in anthropomorphic terms (359E), is used by Eusebios to sustain the thesis that these gods were originally men.

Plutarch is also a major authority in Book 5, devoted to civil religion, and more precisely to the oracles. His treatise *On the obsolescence of oracles* is quoted in chapters 4–5 to demonstrate that the oracles were delivered by the demons, not by the gods. In chapters 16–17, Eusebios uses the same work in order to show that the oracles stopped, and that the demons can die (see also Avdokhin in this volume).

Plutarch also appears as a crucial authority on the classical theme of the disagreement of the philosophers, because Eusebios attributes to him two

<sup>11</sup> The quotation from ps.-Plutarch's *Strōmata* in Book 1 is not really an exception, since it is an anticipation of Eusebios' use of this work in Book 15.

<sup>12</sup> The only known allusion to the *Lives* in the work of Eusebios is made in PE 9.6.6.3–4. It is an allusion to the *Life of Numa*, but made in a quotation of Clement of Alexandria. Thus, it does not stem from a direct reading of the text. In PE 55.34.2.7–8, Eusebios alludes to the story of Cleomedes the pugilist, which is also told in the *Life of Romulus* 28.6. However, Eusebios' source seems to be Pausanias, 6.9.8.

spurious works, the *Strōmata* and the *Opinions of the philosophers*. As a consequence, Plutarch also appears to him as a doxographer. The theme of the disagreement of the philosophers is announced in Book 1 through a quotation from pseudo-Plutarch's *Strōmata* (*PE* 1.8.1–12), but is extensively dealt with in Books 14 and 15, in which ps.-Plutarch's *Opinions of the philosophers* is Eusebios' main source. In Book 15, chapters 23 to 61 constitute a long exposition from ps.-Plutarch's work, in which Eusebios' voice disappears almost completely.

### 3 Plutarch as a Philosopher

Plutarch is mainly used by Eusebios as an informer about the others, but, twice, he is also mentioned as a philosopher, quoted for his own ideas. Both quotations occur in Book 11. This section aims at illustrating Plato's dependence on the Scripture for the most significant doctrines. In this context, Eusebios also intends to quote other Platonists, "in order to clarify the thought of this great man" (*PE* 11.1.4). In other words, this section is based on a twofold symphonic logic which links Plato and the Scripture on the one hand, and Plato and the Platonists on the other. Plutarch is quoted as one of these commentators of Plato.

In *PE* 11.36, the treatise *On the soul*, which alludes to the resurrection of Antyllus, is quoted in order to complete Plato's famous passage about Er the Pamphylian (*Republic* 10, 614a5–d4). The latter was already well known in Christian apologetics before Eusebios.<sup>13</sup> Eusebios' originality consists here in adding Plutarch's text to Plato's testimony. The philosopher's words are considered by Eusebios as being "of the same kind" ("syngene") as Plato's.

In *PE* 11.11, the treatise *On the 'E' at Delphi* (391F–393B) is quoted in order to illustrate Plato's conception of God, which Eusebios compares to Ex. 3.14 ("I am the one who is", in the Septuagint version). Eusebios' interpretation is that both the Scripture and Plato identify God as being proper. This time, the function of Plutarch's text is a bit more complex. It does not only complete Plato's supposed conception of God. In Eusebios' exposition, it more directly serves to illustrate the thought of another Platonist, Numenius (*PE* 11.10.15). And this time, Eusebios also underlines the agreement of Plutarch and Scripture (Mal. 3.6; Ps. 101.28 LXX; Ex. 3.14). As a consequence, Plutarch appears here as one of the philosophers who, in Eusebios' view, may have drawn

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<sup>13</sup> See Clement of Alexandria, *Strōmata* 5.5.14.103.

from Scripture. This motive was very influential on subsequent Christian readings of Plutarch, as we will see. It also opened the way to a Christianisation of Plutarch's figure.

#### 4 Eusebios' Way of Presenting Plutarch's Opinion

Generally speaking, Eusebios is very enthusiastic about Plutarch. He praises him as one of the "most illustrious and famous among all the philosophers" (*PE* 3, Pr. 3). He also underlines the richness of the *Opinions of the philosophers* (*PE* 14.13.9), which, along with the writings on religion, certainly encouraged Eusebios to consider Plutarch as a very learned author and one of the best connoisseurs of religious traditions and philosophy.

However, Eusebios is not always faithful to his source. He may sometimes distort it in two ways. The first device consists in the way he quotes him. Most of the texts he quotes are dialogues. But Eusebios is silent about the dialogical dimension of these works and constantly attributes to Plutarch himself opinions which are expressed by his characters. For example, he quotes as "Plutarch" the famous passage about the death of Pan (*PE* 5.17.1–12), although, in the treatise *On the obsolescence of oracles*, this passage is put in the mouth of Philip, who is quoting a speech by Aemilianus' father Epitherses (419A–D). In the work *On the 'E' at Delphi*, the passage quoted by Eusebios (391F–393B) is put in the mouth of Ammonius. Since the latter is traditionally considered to be expressing Plutarch's view, Eusebios' technique is not so problematic here. In other cases, however, the reader may be more critical. Paul Decharme, for instance, used to think that the work *On the Daedala at Plataea* was a dialogue and that the first passage quoted by Eusebios, illustrating the physical interpretation of the myths, did not express Plutarch's view.<sup>14</sup> Daniel Babut, on the contrary, defended the opinion that Plutarch was not so opposed to the Stoic allegory of the myths and thought that Decharme's assumption about the dia-logical character of the work was not necessary.<sup>15</sup>

Another problem lies in the way Eusebios comments on Plutarch's quotations. As is often the case, his commentaries aim at giving a certain interpretation of the quoted text which may not be right. In Book 5, for instance, he gives a special reading of the passage about the death of Pan.<sup>16</sup> Thanks to a play on the Greek word *pan* ("all"), he states that Plutarch does not witness

<sup>14</sup> Decharme (1898).

<sup>15</sup> Babut (1969: 381 ff.)

<sup>16</sup> See Borgeaud (1983); Coggan (1992).

only the death of Pan, but also of “all kinds of demons” (*pan genos daimonōn*) (*PE* 5.17.13). And since the passage alludes to Tiberius’ reign, Eusebios uses Plutarch’s testimony as an indication of the fact that this death of the demons was a consequence of Christ’s Passion, which Plutarch never said. More generally, the treatise *On the obsolescence of oracles* is used in Book 5 to demonstrate the death of the gods (cf. Avdokhin in this volume). It is quite interesting to remember that, in Plutarch’s view, the demonstration that the oracles were given by demons, not by the gods, originally served to prove that the gods were innocent of the decline of the oracles. But since Eusebios identifies the gods to the demons, Plutarch’s original project is distorted and the philosopher is used, eventually, to say exactly the reverse of what he intended to show.

## 5 How Did Eusebios Have Access to Plutarch’s Text?

The importance of Eusebios in the history of Plutarch’s texts lies mainly in the fact that he saved from oblivion the treatise *On the Daedala at Plataea* – from which we have only the two quotations made by him – and his quotation from *On the soul*. The question of Eusebios’ sources is often linked to the problem of the so-called “library of Caesarea”. However, we may wonder if this is not a methodological mistake: first, we do not exactly know what this library was, and second, we cannot take for granted that every quotation made by Eusebios stems from a direct reading.

Modern scholarship traditionally speaks about the “library of Caesarea”.<sup>17</sup> It is sometimes assumed that this library was founded on the basis of Origen’s personal library, partially brought from Alexandria when he settled in Caesarea in 233. Pamphilus would have restored this library and added to it Origen’s complete works. This library would eventually be the one used by Eusebios, which would entail that the bishop of Caesarea had also increased the original collection. This reconstruction would also imply that the library of Caesarea contained not only biblical works or works by Origen, but also a large amount of pagan texts. Now, this whole picture remains very conjectural. There is no clear reason to connect Origen’s personal library with the library created by Pamphilus, or the latter with Eusebios’ personal library. According to the ancient testimonies, Pamphilus only intended to collect and to copy Origen’s works. We also know, thanks to subscriptions in the manuscripts,<sup>18</sup> that the team gathered around Pamphilus also dedicated its time to copying the

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<sup>17</sup> See Devreesse (1954); Cavallo (1988); and the critical study of Carriker (2003).

<sup>18</sup> See Devreesse (1954: 123–124).

New Testament, and also the Old Testament, according to Origen's edition. This is not sufficient to connect this library with Origen's personal library or the books used by Eusebios later, though of course the temptation is great to do so. For instance, since Plutarch's treatise *On the soul* is quoted by Origen in the *Against Celsus*, written in Caesarea, Andrew James Carriker thinks that Eusebios' quotation from this work may stem from a manuscript brought by Origen from Alexandria to Caesarea.<sup>19</sup> This is of course possible, but remains conjectural. Generally speaking, we should admit that the notion of a "library of Caesarea" is often a misleading concept. The only important question here is to know what *Eusebios' library* was. But even this question may be misleading. Eusebios certainly had a personal library. He could also have used the library constituted by Pamphilus, if this library still existed as such. But the *History of the church* shows that he also used other libraries (that of Jerusalem, for instance). In the end, we cannot always be sure that all the texts he quotes were available to Eusebios from the direct transmission. Eusebios also had intermediary sources, which he rarely reveals.

Carriker, in his study on "the library of Eusebios", assumes that all the Plutarchan treatises Eusebios alludes to were available to him.<sup>20</sup> This is not certain, however. In the case of works which are often quoted and from which Eusebios gives long quotations (*On the obsolescence of oracles* or the *Opinions of the philosophers*), it is difficult to doubt that he possessed a manuscript. However, when the work is quoted more seldom, or when the quotation is far shorter, it is sometimes likely that Eusebios is using an intermediary source.

For instance, we can notice that the treatises *On the soul* and *On the 'E' at Delphi* are quoted only once, in Book 11 of the *Praeparatio*. In 1975, Henri Dominique Saffrey assumed that the comparison of Plato and the Scripture in this work (Books 11–12) may derive from Origen's lost *Strōmateis*.<sup>21</sup> The argument lies especially on Jerome's testimony, which implies that in this work Origen intended to demonstrate Christian doctrines by Plato, Aristotle, Numenius and Cornutus.<sup>22</sup> Eusebios, in Book 11 of the *Praeparatio*, has a similar intention, namely, to prove the concord of Plato and other Platonists with

<sup>19</sup> Carriker (2003: 113).

<sup>20</sup> Carriker (2003: 112).

<sup>21</sup> Saffrey 1975. I tried to sustain this hypothesis in previous publications (Morlet 2004; Morlet 2013).

<sup>22</sup> Letter 70,4: "... Origen wrote ten books of *Strōmateis*, in which he compares together the opinions held respectively by Christians and by philosophers, and confirms all the doctrines of our religion thanks to Plato, Aristotle, Numenius and Cornutus". On Origen's *Strōmateis*, see Grant (1972); Nautin (1977: 293–302); Moreschini (1987). The work was written in Alexandria, probably c. 222–225 AD.

the Scripture. Jerome does not mention Plutarch but his list may not be complete. In another text, he rather alludes to Origen's intention to compare the Scripture with the Stoics.<sup>23</sup>

In the case of Plutarch, Eusebios' possible dependence on Origen's *Strōmateis* might be sustained by further observations: firstly, in the text quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Origen mentions the treatise *On the soul* as a work in which he remembers having read something about miraculous facts. He may thus have in mind precisely the passage quoted by Eusebios about the resurrection of Antyllus. And if this is so, it may be because he already quoted this passage in the *Strōmateis*, which he had composed more than 20 years before. Contrary to what Carricker thinks, the allusion in *Against Celsus* does not prove that Origen had the book with him in Caesarea. On the contrary, the fact that Origen connects Plutarch's *On the Soul* with Numenius' *On the incorruptibility of the soul* offers two further arguments in favour of Eusebios' possible dependence on the *Strōmateis*: 1) Numenius was used in the *Strōmateis*; 2) the topic of Numenius' treatise is close to the theme of Plutarch's quotation in Eusebios – resurrection. It is also interesting to notice that the quotation from *On the 'E' at Delphi* is connected, in Eusebios, with a quotation from Numenius (*PE* 11.10), a philosopher used in the *Strōmateis*, according to Jerome.

In the case of other quotations, the likelihood exists that Porphyry was Eusebios' source. Marco Zambon has shown that Plutarch was among Porphyry's authorities, especially in his treatise *On the statues*,<sup>24</sup> which is used by Eusebios in the same developments where he quotes Plutarch. In a previous publication, I have suggested that the two quotations made by Eusebios from Plutarch's work *On the Daedala at Plataea* might have been taken from Porphyry's treatise.<sup>25</sup>

## 6      Later Apologetics: Theodoreto, Cyril and Some Anonymous Collections of Pagan Texts

Eusebios played a major role in introducing Plutarch to Christian apologetics. Theodoreto of Cyrrhus, in his *Therapeutic for Hellenic maladies* (around 419–423)<sup>26</sup> and Cyril of Alexandria, in his *Against Julian* (around 434–437 or

<sup>23</sup> *Dialogi contra Pelagianos*, Moreschini 3.10 ff.

<sup>24</sup> Zambon (2002: 65, 67, 71).

<sup>25</sup> Morlet (2005).

<sup>26</sup> Text and trans. Canivet (1958). On Theodoreto's apologetic project, see Canivet (1958); Papadogiannakis (2012).

439–441)<sup>27</sup> quote Plutarch several times (see Appendix). Their quotations of Plutarch all stem from the *Praeparatio*, except those taken from the *Opinions of the philosophers* – Theodoretos quotes from the *Praeparatio* but also from Aetius, and Cyril seems to read the *Opinions* independently from Eusebios.<sup>28</sup> Theodoretos, however, alludes to the *Lives* (*Ther.* 2.24), when Eusebios does not.

Theodoretos and Cyril heavily abridge Eusebios' quotations. Except in the case of the *Opinions* and the work *On the obsolescence of oracles* (but only once<sup>29</sup>), they never give the title of the work they use. And Plutarch's text is generally alluded to or summarised more than really quoted. Apart from the *Opinions*, Cyril keeps only the passage from *On the 'E' at Delphi*. Theodoretos keeps more quotations from the *Praeparatio* (from the *Opinions*, but also from *On the obsolescence of oracles*, *On Isis and Osiris*, *On the 'E' at Delphi*, *On the soul*, the *Strōmata*).

Whereas Cyril is faithful to Eusebios in his way of using the quotation from *On the 'E' at Delphi*, Theodoretos uses Eusebios' collection more freely. For instance, he quotes the latter text in a passage on God not as being, but as unbegotten.<sup>30</sup> from the long quotation made by Eusebios, Theodoretos only keeps the passage 392E, and he quotes Plutarch's text with the word *agennēton* and not *agenēton* as was the case in Eusebios and in most manuscripts of Plutarch ("What, then, is that which is eternal, *unbegotten*, incorruptible, to which no length of time brings change?"). The passage thus becomes a specific testimony about the Father, not God in general, which opens the way to a Trinitarian reading of Plutarch. And when he quotes again the passage from *On the soul*, Theodoretos includes it in a demonstration "about the end and the judgement",<sup>31</sup> whereas Eusebios used it as a pagan *testimonium* about resurrection. Theodoretos continues to see Plutarch as a *polymathēs* ("man of wide learning") and a crucial pagan witness against the oracles.<sup>32</sup> However, Theodoretos goes further than Eusebios in assuming that Plutarch, like Plotinus, he says, conceived the existence of the Trinity – an assumption which

<sup>27</sup> Text and trans. Migne (1859), Brugiére & Évieux (1985), Boulnois (2016). On Cyril's way of quoting the texts, see Grant (1964).

<sup>28</sup> See Diels (1879: 10–12).

<sup>29</sup> *Ther.* 10.5.

<sup>30</sup> *Ther.* 2.108.

<sup>31</sup> *Ther.* 1111.47.

<sup>32</sup> *Ther.* 10.5.

echoes his peculiar reading of *On the 'E' at Delphi* 392E.<sup>33</sup> He also states that both philosophers had heard the gospels.<sup>34</sup>

Plutarch is also quoted in late anthologies of pagan philosophical texts aiming at showing the truth of Christianity.<sup>35</sup> They probably date to a later period than Theodoretos and Cyril. In some of these texts,<sup>36</sup> Plutarch appears as a Greek authority on the Trinity. This recalls Theodoretos' statement. In another group of texts, Plutarch appears more clearly as a pagan *prophet*. He announces the Trinity but also the virgin, the birth of Jesus, his Passion and the universal salvation of humanity.<sup>37</sup> The same texts are sometimes attributed to other philosophers (Chilon,<sup>38</sup> Solon,<sup>39</sup> Plato<sup>40</sup>). More should be done to find the origin of these texts, but they have very little chance to have an authentic basis. Nonetheless, these anthologies witness the importance of Plutarch among the pagan authorities used by the Christians and the fact that he could be considered as a pagan prophet of Christianity. This also probably implies that the authors of these late anthologies did not have a clear knowledge of the period of his lifetime.

## 7 Conclusion

Eusebios is the first Christian writer to quote Plutarch's texts. The way he happened to know and to have access to Plutarch's works is unknown. The collection of these works in Caesarea may go back to Origen, but nothing prevents us from assuming that Eusebios was responsible for the most part of it. Besides, some of his quotations probably stem from intermediary sources. Eusebios made Plutarch a major pagan authority in Christian apologetics. His influence is noticeable in Theodoretos, Cyril and late anonymous anthologies in which Plutarch appears both as a philosopher and a prophet testifying to the truth of Christianity.

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<sup>33</sup> *Ther.* 2.84.

<sup>34</sup> *Ther.* 2.87.

<sup>35</sup> These anonymous anthologies have been edited by Erbse (1995). There are a few Syriac versions of these anthologies, in which Plutarch appears (see Brock [1984]).

<sup>36</sup> See in Erbse's edition, *Thesauri minores*, μ.4 (Erbse 125), χ.8 (Erbse 112) and ω.6 (Erbse 98).

<sup>37</sup> For all these prophecies, see Erbse (1995: 131, 202).

<sup>38</sup> See ω.6 (Erbse 98) and χ.7 (Erbse 111).

<sup>39</sup> See Δ.1 (Erbse 131) and ω.11 (Erbse 101–102).

<sup>40</sup> See Δ.1 (Erbse 131) and χ.12 (Erbse 114).

## Appendix

Texts of Plutarch's alluded to or quoted by Eusebios, Theodoretos and Cyril  
 N. B.: the first figures are a reference to the *Praeparatio evangelica*.

### – Allusion

1.3.8.11 *On talkativeness*, 3,503C?

### – Quotations

- 1.8.1–12 *Strōmata* 1–12 (fr. 179, Sandbach) = THEODORETOS 2.108
- 3.1.1–7 *On the Daidala at Plataea* (fr. 157, Sandbach)
- 3.8.1. 1–9 *On the Daidala at Plataea* (fr. 158, Sandbach)
- 3.3.16 *On Isis and Osiris* 22,359E
- 3.3.11 *On Isis and Osiris* 32,363D
- 5.16.2.4–4.7 *On the obsolescence of oracles* 5,411E–F = THEODORETOS 10.10
- 5.4.1.1–18 *On the obsolescence of oracles* 10,414F–415B
- 5.4.2.2–9 *On the obsolescence of oracles* 12,416C
- 5.4.3.2–27 *On the obsolescence of oracles* 13–14,417B–D = THEODORETOS 10.8
- 5.17.1–12 *On the obsolescence of oracles* 16–18,418E–420A
- 5.4.2.11–18 *On the obsolescence of oracles* 16,418E = THEODORETOS 10.6
- 5.5.3.5–34 *On the obsolescence of oracles* 21,421B–E = THEODORETOS 3.57
- 5.5.1 *On Isis and Osiris* 25,360D–F = THEODORETOS 3.56
- 5.5.2.2–12 *On Isis and Osiris* 26–27,361C–D
- 11.36.1 *On the soul* (fr. 176, Sandbach) = THEODORETOS 11.46
- 11.11.1–15 *On the 'E' at Delphi* 17–20,391F–393B = CYRIL 908B–908C = THEODORETOS 2.108
- 14.5.14.1–3 *Opinions of the philosophers* 875D–876D
- 14.5.14.4–6 *Opinions of the philosophers* 877C 878A
- 14.5.16.1 *Opinions of the philosophers* 880D–E = THEODORETOS 2.112; 3.4
- 14.5.16.2 *Opinions of the philosophers* 881A
- 14.5.16.3–6 *Opinions of the philosophers* 881B–C
- 14.5.16.7–10 *Opinions of the philosophers* 881E–882A
- 15.5.32.1–7 *Opinions of the philosophers* 878C–F
- 15.5.33.1–5 *Opinions of the philosophers* 879A–C
- 15.5.43–45 *Opinions of the philosophers* 882B–D
- 15.5.34–42 *Opinions of the philosophers* 886D–888B
- 15.5.30–31 *Opinions of the philosophers* 888D–889A
- 15.5.46–49 *Opinions of the philosophers* 889A–D
- 15.5.23–25 *Opinions of the philosophers* 889F–890D
- 15.5.50 *Opinions of the philosophers* 890F–891B

15.5.26–29 *Opinions of the philosophers* 891B–E  
 15.5.51–54 *Opinions of the philosophers* 891E–892C  
 15.5.55–56 *Opinions of the philosophers* 895C–E  
 15.5.58 *Opinions of the philosophers* 896A–B  
 15.5.59 *Opinions of the philosophers* 896F–897A  
 15.5.60–61 *Opinions of the philosophers* 898E–899B = THEODORETOΣ 5.19–22

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# Plutarch and the Neoplatonists: Porphyry, Proklos, Simplikios

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## 1 Introduction

A comprehensive and thorough account of Plutarch's legacy in late ancient Platonism would require a wider investigation than the present overview permits, and would face some serious challenges. As Jan Opsomer has pointed out,<sup>2</sup> Plutarch's views were often misread or unjustly attacked by later Platonists, and it is also hard to assess what kind of knowledge the Neoplatonists had of his texts. Despite these difficulties, and despite Plutarch's wavering fame among later Platonists, it is possible to affirm that he played a role within the larger process of self-reflection and self-redefinition performed by later Platonists. The present chapter, by focussing on a selection of passages from Porphyry, Proklos and Simplikios, aims to explore Plutarch's influence within the Neoplatonists' reconsideration of the Platonic philosophy, its aims, roots and historical development.

As we will see, Porphyry, Proklos and Simplikios integrate Plutarch's heritage into their own agendas by adapting it to their own specific historical context, which ranges from the third to the sixth century AD, a time when the fundamental reassessment of Platonism also responds to the urgency of supplying new ways to happiness and salvation that could compete with those provided by Christianity. Broadly speaking, these three authors belong to a stage of Platonism characterised by the preponderance of spiritual, religious and ethical tendencies, and marked by a deep interest in psychology and metaphysics. Plutarch's philosophical reflection is notably characterised by similar threads and by the effort of recovering the "theological" character of Platonism

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Opsomer (2001).

(including the faith in oracles and divination), which the Chaeronean conceived as a typical feature of this philosophical tradition.<sup>3</sup>

In the first centuries AD, philosophy largely depends on the exegesis of ancient authors and becomes *itself* a hermeneutical activity. The Neoplatonists tend to ascribe a sort of “initiatory” function to the practice of interpreting selected writings and unearthing their hidden, almost revelatory, authentic meaning. All three distinguished representatives of Neoplatonism here considered rely extensively on previous authors for their didactic and scholarly activity: by providing a rich corpus of sources and references, they all have contributed substantially to the organisation and transmission of philosophical works and broader scientific achievements to posterity. Due to the relevance that they ascribe to selected previous thinkers, which they revere as immortal “authorities”,<sup>4</sup> the modern scholar finds it arduous to disentangle their original contribution among a network of intertextual references.

Nevertheless, even the broadly-employed *genre* of commentary is adequate for conveying the personal methodology, interpretative choices, educational aims and undeniable creativity of every single author. Under their apparent homogeneity, Porphyry, Proklos and Simplikios clearly represent three distinct phases of the development of Platonism: they adopt diverse approaches to the history of philosophy, provide original answers to similar theoretical questions, and therefore help us to observe Plutarch from three different perspectives. The passages here chosen for this multi-level exploration have been extracted from Porphyry’s *On abstinence*, Proklos’ *Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus* and Simplikios’ *Commentary on Epictetus’ Handbook*.

## 2 Porphyry and Plutarch

Porphyry, born in 232/233 AD, was raised in Tyre, a dynamic port-city in Phoenicia; his early contact with Oriental culture (Jewish, Egyptian, Chaldaean) had a long impact on his production. After studying grammar and rhetoric in Athens with Cassius Longinus, he became a disciple of Plotinus in Rome (263–268 AD). In 268 he moved to Sicily to find relief from his depression. Since then, until his death in Rome (c. 305 AD), his biographical details remain

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Opsomer (1996). A well-informed contribution on the survival of Plutarch in another Neoplatonist, Damaskios, is Roskam (2012b) and Roskam in this volume.

<sup>4</sup> The concept of “authority”, crucial in the philosophy of the first centuries AD, has been studied in the recent work by Boodts *et al.* (2016); in the same volume, with regard to the present topic, see especially Opsomer and Ulacco (2016: 21–46), and Demulder (2016: 87–118).

uncertain but he surely engaged in didactic and writing activities. He was an exceptionally prolific author, but out of 70 works attributed to him just 21 have survived, mostly in fragments. Besides editing the works of his master and collecting them in six *Enneads*, introduced by his encomiastic *Life of Plotinus*,<sup>5</sup> he wrote commentaries on Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, and treatises on a wide variety of subjects (metaphysics, psychology, rhetoric, science). One of his last works is the *Letter to Marcella*, his wife, dated to 303 AD.

Porphyry's philosophy is profoundly influenced by the Middle-Platonists and especially, as Marco Zambon has demonstrated,<sup>6</sup> his complex relation with Plutarch shows some remarkable points of contact with him. Both Plutarch and Porphyry attribute a crucial importance to religious and mystery rites, and share an encyclopaedic conception of knowledge as a hierarchical system of "multiple disciplines" (*polymatheia*) – a kind of educational program that combines intellectual and moral improvement, and ultimately leads to the supreme end of "epoptic" science.<sup>7</sup> The final stage of this ascending path of knowledge acquisition and ethical development is intended as a hyper-rational apprehension of transcendent entities (Being and god), in the form of a momentary illumination that strikes the noblest part of the soul.

The analogy between these two thinkers is manifold. The approach to the Platonic tradition developed by both Porphyry and Plutarch is similarly shaped by their intent to harmonise Plato and Aristotle,<sup>8</sup> and by their common adherence to Pythagorean principles. Furthermore, they share a similar conception of exegesis, according to which texts are reservoirs of hidden messages that the intelligent reader has to disentangle.<sup>9</sup> They attribute this peculiar feature to philosophical works, traditional poetry as well as to Greek and Oriental myths and ritual customs, in the belief that philosophical hermeneutic has an ethical-soteriological end – namely, to help human intellect ascend to the divine (crucial in this respect are Porphyry's *The cave of the Nymphs* and *On the Styx*).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The same idealising approach characterises his *Life of Pythagoras*.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Zambon (2002: esp. 47–128).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* Zambon clearly explains how the concept of *epeptenia* is intended in two slightly different ways by Plutarch and Porphyry. For Plutarch see *De Is. et Os.* 382D–E and cf. Pl. *Tht.* 186d; *Ep.* 7.344b–c.

<sup>8</sup> Porphyry wrote a treatise *On the one school of Plato and Aristotle*, now lost. He studied Aristotle's logic, and his writings (especially, the *Isagoge/Introduction*) were precious for the medieval debates on universals.

<sup>9</sup> See the notion of "wisdom expressed in riddles" (*ainigmatōdēs sophia*) in Plu. *De Is. et Os.* 354C; cf. 378A–B.

<sup>10</sup> Despite Porphyry's interest in oracles and divination (especially in the Chaldaean oracles), he did not practise the magical-ascetic activity of theurgy, of which the soteriological

Some key aspects of Porphyry's reflection emerge in *On abstinence from killing animals*, where he presents vegetarianism as a virtuous choice and as a crucial component of a lifelong, ethical-ritual exercise of purification and self-restraint (*askēsis*). The very way in which Porphyry has composed his four-book treatise *On abstinence* is revealing of his *polymatheia* (he relies on a variety of disciplines, such as ethics, sciences, anthropology) as well as of his own technique of engaging with previous authors and texts: he sews together a patchwork of unacknowledged sources, some of which he shares with Plutarch – like Theophrastus, Pythagoras and Empedocles – while also employing some typical arguments drawn from the Greek traditional reflection on vegetarianism.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, and most importantly, he relies extensively on Plutarch's writings – despite acknowledging him only in three cases (*On abstinence* 3.18.3; 3.24.6; 4.3.8);<sup>12</sup> his main reference is Plutarch's *On the intelligence of animals*, a sort of rhetorical exercise. As Fabienne Jourdan has demonstrated, also Plutarch's *On the eating of meat* might have a remarkable weight in Porphyry's *On abstinence*.<sup>13</sup>

The analysis of specific passages copied or abridged from the works of the Chaeronean reveals Porphyry's art of reception. He absorbs Plutarch's lexicon, argumentative strategy and enjoyable anecdotes, while sharing his sympathy for animals and his fundamental theoretical assumption that they participate

and theoretical relevance he denies. It might be useful to remind that Damaskios draws a contrast between those who put philosophy in the first place (such as Porphyry and Plotinus) and others (such as Iamblichos, Syrianus and Proklos) who instead rely on the hieratic art. Plato, according to Damaskios, mastered both (cf. *In Phaed.* 1.172.1–3). For the intrinsically philosophical value of the practice of theurgy in the Neoplatonists, see the fundamental study by Addey (2014).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Chapoutier (1990: 283). Another important textual intersection between Porphyry and Plutarch concerns two passages from Porphyry's fragmentary *On the Styx*, recognised as direct quotation from Plutarch by Sandbach and Bernardakis; see in this regard the very informative section in Castelletti (2006: 305–310). In this instance, Plutarch is employed as a reliable source for allegoric interpretation (cf. also fr. 194a Sandbach).

<sup>12</sup> Porph. *Abst.* 1.4.4–6.1 comes from Plu. *De soll. an.* 964A–C, and follows from *Abst.* 3.24.4, which reports *De soll. an.* 963B–C. *Abst.* 3.18.3 is an acknowledged quotation from Plutarch (fr. 193 Sandbach) that Jourdan hypothesises to belong to *On eating flesh*. *Abst.* 3.20.7–24.6 summarises *De soll. an.* 959E–963F, but introduces new elements and mistakes; within this section, Sorabji (1993: 192) has detected an interesting connection between *Abst.* 3.21.4 and *De soll. an.* 960D–E, where Plutarch criticises the Stoic assumption that sense perception goes together with understanding. In *Abst.* 3.22.6–7 Porphyry quotes *De soll. an.* 961F–962B, while *Abst.* 3.26.6 and 3.27 recall *De soll. an.* 959F. *Abst.* 4.3.1 draws on Plutarch's *Lyc.* 8–10 and 12 (also cf. Plu. *Apophth. Lac.* 226D–227A). Finally, *Abst.* 4.3–5 echoes Plutarch's *De soll. an.* 975E–F; 977E; 980D–E.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Jourdan (2005: 431).

in rationality but are incapable of virtue, since they do not have access to education (*paideia*).<sup>14</sup> Porphyry inherits Plutarch's principal enemies and privileged target, the Stoics, as well as his special technique of fighting them with their own weapons, by pulling their arguments to extreme conclusions in order to show their flawed, contradictory nature.<sup>15</sup>

Plutarch's defence of vegetarianism demonstrates that animals share in manlike qualities and even have a sense of justice – which counteracts the Stoic theory of justice as a prerogative of human associations.<sup>16</sup> In order to prove that it is an act of "savagery" (*agriōtēs*) and "injustice" (*adikia*) to kill animals for luxury, Plutarch develops a physiological-biological argument: the healthy condition of those who regularly abstain from meat clearly manifests that nature does not oblige humans to be carnivorous. We do not kill animals out of necessity; rather, we perpetrate an act that is "against nature" (*hyperphyōs*) and "terrible" (*deinon*), with the sole purpose of satisfying a superfluous, execrable desire.<sup>17</sup> On the contrary, a delicate attitude towards animals would instil the sense of justice into the single individual and, by extension, into the entire human society. Justice must be exerted towards animals themselves – who, since they are just, deserve our justice.<sup>18</sup>

Porphyry employs this passage by bending Plutarch to his own ends: he seeks to underscore the soteriological function of vegetarianism, by including it within a holistic conception of the human being, according to which material sustenance is basically identical to spiritual nourishment. In this framework, the vegetarian diet helps the soul's abstraction and "disengagement" (*apostasia*) from bodily affections,<sup>19</sup> thus fostering a gradual ascetic detachment from materiality, oriented towards the highest level of virtue and the supreme end of "assimilation to god"<sup>20</sup> – described by Porphyry even in *physical* terms.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Porph. *Abst.* 3.22.6–7 and Plu. *De soll. an.* 961F–962B.

<sup>15</sup> See Sorabji (1993: 192).

<sup>16</sup> In this section I am especially referring to Porph. *Abst.* 1.4.4 = Plu. fr. 193 Sandbach.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Plu. *De soll. an.* 965A and 994C.

<sup>18</sup> Plutarch in this passage (*De esu* 995F–996A) employs the notion of "mildness" (*praotēs*) which is a fundamental element of his moral theory, as part of the correct attitudes of the virtuous man. For a thorough investigation on this concept, see Romilly (1979: 293–307). Also cf. Plu. *De esu* 999B.

<sup>19</sup> Plu. *De soll. an.* 964A–C employed in Porph. *Abst.* 1.31.

<sup>20</sup> The Platonic invitation of "becoming like god, so far as is possible" (Pl. *Tht.* 176b) was largely adopted by Middle Platonists as a pivotal ethical principle.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Porph. *Abst.* 1.54.6. Other references to the notion of "assimilation to god" (*homoiōsis theō*) are found in *Abst.* 2.43.3; 3.37.

Porph. *Abst.* 3.26.13: For this reason the just man seems to disadvantage himself in bodily concerns, yet does himself no injustice: for by tutelage and control of the body he will increase his inner good, that is his assimilation to the god.... 27.1: But when the end is the utmost possible assimilation to the god, harmlessness is safeguarded in all cases.... 27.2: Thus someone who does not restrict harmlessness to human beings, but extends it also to the other animals, is more like the god.

Eng. Trans. CLARK, 2000

Porphyry describes animals as also having a sort of didactic capacity: they can teach us the values of justice and rationality, on which to build a better world – thus materialising an idealistic project of universal brotherhood (*oiketōsis*) and liberation. As the passage below will show, this educational process is aimed at transforming our entire society into a “heavenly association”. Porphyry, indeed, implants the need of justice towards animals – of clear Plutarchan derivation – within a new theoretical framework and meaningfully connects it with the concepts of reason and happiness. All these notions are ultimately assembled around the supreme end of “assimilation to god”<sup>22</sup>

Porph. *Abst.* 3.27.7–8: So the man who lives in accordance with the intellect discerns more clearly what should be chosen and what should not than the man who lives in accordance with unreason ... But, people say, if everyone was convinced by these arguments, what will become of us? Obviously, we shall be happy, when injustice has been expelled from the human race and justice is a fellow-citizen among us too, as in heaven.... 27.10: We shall imitate the race of gold, we shall imitate those who have been liberated.

Eng. Trans. CLARK, 2000

Porphyry, who engages in a vigorous defence of pagan values,<sup>23</sup> and is therefore interested in emphasising the spiritual dimension of a truly philosophical way of life, radicalises the religious and mystical aspects of vegetarianism by including in *On abstinence* a demonological digression.<sup>24</sup> This section contributes to the general initiatory tone of the treatise and is significantly introduced by the invitation: “let it remain unsaid’ by me” – resembling those of mystery

<sup>22</sup> See Porph. *Sent.* 32; for the relations between this *Sententia* and Plot. *ENN.* 1.2 and the innovative character of Porphyry’s ethics, see Catapano (2006).

<sup>23</sup> As clear in *Against the Christians*; see TeSelle (1975).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Porph. *Abst.* 2.36.6–43.

rites.<sup>25</sup> Porphyry's demonology is founded on a corpus of theories on *daimones* drawn from the Platonic tradition, many of which are shared by Plutarch, such as: demons are subject to passions (*Abst.* 2.39.3) and made of "spirit" (*pneuma*, *Abst.* 2.38.2); they are intermediaries and messengers between mankind and the gods,<sup>26</sup> and therefore have a role in divination (*Abst.* 2.38.3). Porphyry moreover embraces an originally Xenocratean idea, also present in Plutarch's *On Isis and Osiris*, according to which demons require religious festivals consisting in superstitious ceremonies, ferocious rites and barbarous acts, such as animal slaughter.<sup>27</sup> Gods instead, given their sublime nature and perfect virtue, would never demand any savage, inhuman, nefarious acts like the ones requested by evil demonic beings.

In this regard, I want to point out a pivotal divergence between Porphyry and Plutarch: Porphyry clearly rejects animal sacrifice and promotes "sacrifice of inanimate things" (*thysiai tōn apsychōn*, in *Abst.* 2.37.3), which closely recalls the "intellectual offerings" (*logikai thysiai*) of Hermeticism.<sup>28</sup> This connects him to a deep-rooted tradition of thinkers, including Orpheus and Pythagoras, who disprove the religious-civic custom of bloody sacrifice. Plutarch, instead, at least in the Delphic dialogues,<sup>29</sup> seems to accept animal sacrifice as a necessary ritual practice that even guarantees the effectiveness of the divinatory act. Porphyry is also expressively against the use of animals for mantic operations (such as hepatoscopy and other forms of entrail reading),<sup>30</sup> while we do not find the same hostility in Plutarch. The banishment of meat diet, as associated with bloody sacrifice, and its replacement with spiritual offerings is therefore more evident in Porphyry and attests to the internal renewal of Platonism recalled in the beginning of this chapter. Similar arguments were indeed part of the wider reaction of late ancient paganism against civic religion and Christianity.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *Abst.* 2.36.6.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Pl. *Symp.* 202e.

<sup>27</sup> Porph. *Abst.* 1.33.1; 2.37.5; 2.39.3. Cf. Plu. *De Is. et Os.* 361B. Porphyry also establishes a relation between demons and meteorological events. Another notable testimony of this is found in Proklos' *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* (cf. Prokl. in *Tim.* 2.11.10–17), where he ascribes to Porphyry the idea that demons, given their physical nature, may even engender natural phenomena.

<sup>28</sup> Also cf. the Porphyrean expressions "sacred sacrifice" (*thysian hieran*, *Abst.* 2.34.3) and "intellectual sacrifice" (*noera thysia*, *Abst.* 2.45.4). For this topic, see the extremely instructive study by Camplani-Zambon (2002).

<sup>29</sup> See for instance Plu. *De def. or.* 437A–B.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Porph. *Abst.* 2.48; 2.51–53

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Camplani-Zambon (2002).

With all that in mind, we can argue that Porphyry pushes even further the “epistemic” value that Plutarch attributes to animals as “symbols” that guide our understanding of the nature and functioning of the cosmos, both in a theological and ethical sense.<sup>32</sup> According to Porphyry, animal behaviour embodies a “perfect symbol” of true justice, thanks to which we can learn the value of justice and transfer it into our life. By resorting to a wide conceptual apparatus, Porphyry succeeds in providing rational justification to ascetic “practices” (*praxeis*) and gives ground to his idea of “interior religion”, disengaged from the official cultic context – an attitude clearly at odds with Plutarch’s reverential respect towards the institution of the Delphic oracle and civic religion at large. Finally, Porphyry – while relying on Plutarch’s words – accomplishes the end of promoting the purification of human body and soul, leading to the intellectual ascent towards the divine, by creatively combining sound Platonic philosophical principles with original exegetical choices.

### 3 Proklos and Plutarch

Proklos, born in Constantinople in 412 AD, spent his youth in the Lycian city of Xanthos. We have information about his life especially thanks to the laudatory biography written by his affectionate disciple Marinus. Proklos moved to Alexandria to study mathematics with Heron and logic with Olympiodoros the Peripatetic. He attended the Platonic school in Athens, under Plutarch of Athens (430/431 AD) and then Syrianus (432 AD). After the death of his beloved master Syrianus in 437 AD, he became the leader of the Platonic school, a role that he held with enthusiasm until his death in 485 AD. His life of dedication to scholarly activities included the practice of mystery rites and theurgy.

The writings of Proklos reveal his systematising attitude and his astonishing erudition.<sup>33</sup> He wrote five commentaries on Plato’s dialogues: first and most importantly the *Parmenides* – of which he gave a very influential theological interpretation – and the *Timaeus*; then the *Cratylus*, the *Republic* and the *Alcibiades*. His original works, such as the *Elements of theology*, the *Platonic theology* and three monographs (on providence, free will, and evil, respectively) expose his trend of conjoining religious-revelatory contents (drawn from the Chaldaean oracles, Orphic theology, Homeric epic) and philosophical reflection.

<sup>32</sup> For the “symbolic value” of animals in Plutarch, cf. Meeusen (2013).

<sup>33</sup> Festugière (1963) offers a good and accessible overview of the methodology employed by Proklos in his commentaries.

Proklos' interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus*, developed in a five-book commentary, and especially his controversy and criticism against Plutarch's literal interpretation of the generation of the world soul (*psychogonia*), bear clear signs of his rigorous metaphysical system. Proklos holds the cosmos as generated from one single cause and principle; in his system, evil is "without a cause", thus has a merely parasitical, accidental existence (it is called a *parhypostasis*).<sup>34</sup> On the contrary, Plutarch's metaphysics is founded on a three-principles structure,<sup>35</sup> and his conception of an "evil pre-cosmic world soul" seems to attribute to evil an independent existence.<sup>36</sup> Proklos also rejects Plutarch's idea that the cosmos was created "in time" (*kata chronon*) and categorically denies that a "non-generated" (*agenētos*) disordered matter and/or a maleficent irrational soul existed before the creation of the cosmos by the demigod.<sup>37</sup>

Plutarch's *On the generation of the soul in the Timaeus* is known to Proklos thanks to Porphyry, whose words are preserved and reported in Proklos' own commentary.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, as Andrea Rescigno has argued, Proklos almost surely did not have direct access to Plutarch's exegetical treatise, but he probably knew the Delphic dialogue *On the obsolescence of oracles*.<sup>39</sup> In this respect, I would like to focus on one special passage of Proklos' *Commentary*, where he quite surprisingly seems to hold Plutarch in high respect, summoning him as a competent authority as concerns the nature of demons.

Prokl. *in Tim.* 1.112.26–113.7: I know that Plutarch of Chaeronea tells the story that, on one of the little islands around Britain – one that is reputed

<sup>34</sup> Simplikios will also follow this stance. For a comprehensive account of Proklos' notion of evil and its roots, see Opsomer-Steel (1999).

<sup>35</sup> For Plutarch's metaphysics, see Ferrari (1995; 1996). Proklos' interpretation of the *psychogonia* in the *Timaeus* is found in Prokl. *in Tim.* 2.152.24–154.26. While intending to propose a correct and faithful exegesis of Plato's *psychogonia*, he rejects those of Eratosthenes, Numenius, Severus, Plutarch, Atticus, Plotinus and Theodorus of Asine.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Plu. *De an. procr.; De comm. not.* 1066F.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Prokl. *in Tim.* 1.276.30–277.3 for the refusal of literary reading of the *Timaeus*; for the other topics, cf. 1.382.12–384.2–5. Cf. Rescigno (1998: 111) and the extremely accurate Phillips (2002).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Opsomer (2001: 188 and n. 4). Another intermediary source is Antoninus, pupil of Ammonius Saccas (cf. Prokl. *in Tim.* 2.154.6). For the complex references and relations among Plutarch, Atticus, Porphyry and Proklos, see Baltes (1978) and Whittaker (1987). Whittaker, in particular, stresses important correspondences between Proklos and the Middle Platonists, pointing out that some of their features re-emerge in Proklos after a "silence" of centuries. In this regard, he notes in Proklos the echo of *ho prōtos theos* ("the first god", an expression recurring in Plu. *Quaest. Plat.* 1007E); cf. Whittaker (1987: 291, n. 32; see also 284).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Rescigno (1998: 113).

to be holy and inviolate, and has for this reason been left alone by those in power – there often occur disturbances of the air and the unleashing of either downpours or thunderbolts. Further [he says that] the inhabitants who are used to such happenings say that one of the superior powers has passed on, meaning by “superior ones” souls that are experiencing a change of bodies and are leaving one life-form. All the same one should not dismiss the idea that such things occur also when souls descend into bodies, especially in the case of those who are workers of greatness and have received a daemonic lot, such as this myth riddlingly suggests was the case with Phaethon’s soul.

Eng. Trans. TARRANT, 2007

This passage belongs to a section of the *Commentary* where Proklos explains the myth of Phaethon (*Tim.* 22c3–7) and reads it in line with his doctrine of the “vehicle of the soul” (*ochēma*). The Plutarchan ‘story’ here mentioned is drawn from Plutarch’s *On the obsolescence of oracles*,<sup>40</sup> in this dialogue, Demetrius of Tarsus similarly describes the remote and desolate islands in the north of Britain as sacred places inhabited by divine beings. In these lands, the death of the demons is accompanied by extraordinary natural events – such as tempests, storms, pestilential vapours. Despite many analogies, Proklos nevertheless introduces slight variations to Plutarch’s account,<sup>41</sup> and adds that not just the disappearance, but even the embodying of demonic souls is signalled by ominous phenomena.

As we can see, Proklos expounds the traditional Platonic demonology – resumed from Plutarch as a reliable expert of the topic – in order to explain his own doctrine of “transmigration” (*metensōmatōsis*), which entails transformations and fluctuations of souls across the spheres.

Even more notable is the following passage:

Prokl. *in Tim.* 1.113,14–21: And that the gods should use these souls, as they also use matter-bound daemons, as tools for their operations on earth, and that through these they should effect conflagrations or plague or various other sufferings for those who deserve to suffer them. And that they should use those souls that are related to the heavenly causes of generation as assistants in whatever tasks they undertake. That there should be

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Plu. *De def. or.* 419E–420A; for Proklos’ employment of this passage, cf. Festugière (1966: 156) and Tarrant (2007: 208, n. 483).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Rescigno (1998) and his parallel reading of the two passages (131–132).

many causes of the same events is not surprising, when some are acting in one capacity, others in another.

Eng. Trans. TARRANT, 2007

Here Proklos explains the accidents that accompany *both* the soul's incarnation into, and separation from, the corporeal element. Interestingly, as hypothesised by Harold Tarrant,<sup>42</sup> this passage ends with a reference to the multiplicity of causes at work behind the events taking place in the world of becoming.

In this regard, I would like to draw attention to one important matter that may sustain Tarrant's insight: the theory of the existence of multiple levels of causation is absolutely central in Plutarch's *On the obsolescence of oracles* and is also crucial for Lamprias' final and most reliable account of the phenomenon of oracle divination, expressed in the end of the dialogue.<sup>43</sup> According to Lamprias – probably Plutarch's spokesperson for this subject – divination, like every other phenomenon, is engendered by two pairs of causes: the ones divine (final and efficient) and the others physical (material and instrumental). Plutarch holds this explanation as altogether scientifically accurate and theologically acceptable:<sup>44</sup> indeed, it takes into account both causal levels (transcendent and contingent) on which the cosmic events are founded, and is respectful towards the gods, by introducing demons as divine "helpers and assistants" in mantic operations.<sup>45</sup>

What is striking is that both Plutarch and Proklos envisage the multiple causation theory and the demonological theory as strictly interconnected. In the

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Tarrant (2007: 208, n. 484).

<sup>43</sup> Proklos' positive attitude towards the Chaeronean is attested on another remarkable occasion: he largely quotes from Plutarch's *On god's slowness to punish* (which has been very influential for Platonists and Christians) in essays 8 and 9 of his *Ten problems concerning providence*. For a thorough analysis, see Frazier (2011); Opsomer-Steel (2012: 51–59); Opsomer (2016). Moreover, entire sections of Proklos' *Commentary on Hesiod's Works and Days* seem to have been drawn from Plutarch's own commentary (see Sandbach, 1969). On Proklos' debt to Plutarch in this respect, see Faraggiana di Sarzana (1978). As explained by Roskam (2012a: 99), Plutarch is also a fundamental source for the life of Alcibiades in Prok. *In Alc.*; nevertheless he is never acknowledged, and just referred to as an unnamed "historian".

<sup>44</sup> According to the Chaeronean, all natural phenomena are provoked by a synergy of natural and intelligible causes (cf. *De prim. frig.* 948B–C). Based on this conviction, he develops his "double causation theory", an epistemologically sound explanatory model, drawn from a combined reading of *Timaeus* 68e–69a and *Phaedo* 98b–c, which is based on the distinction and interaction between primary (rational) and auxiliary (irrational) causes; cf. Donini (1992); Opsomer (1998: 215–216).

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *De def. or.* 417A.

passage here quoted, indeed, Proklos defines demons as assistants of the gods: they are the helpers to which the deities resort for undertaking specific tasks in the material cosmos, thus representing the divine/transcendent causality at work in the world of becoming. Similarly, Cleombrotus' demonological exposition in *On the obsolescence of oracles* represents *daimones* as mediators, interpreters, ministers and helpers of the gods, and even as their attendants and secretaries (*leitourgoi, hypēretes, grammateis*).<sup>46</sup>

I believe that these conceptual convergences certainly testify to Proklos' knowledge of Plutarch's *On the obsolescence of oracles* and to his interest in the model of scientific explanation developed by the Chaeronean, which merges together two main assumptions: first, that of multiple levels of causality at play behind events (Plutarch was indeed the first systematiser of a "multiple causation" theory, later employed also by Iamblichos); second, that of the existence of the demons and their active role in the cosmos. The texts here examined have shown that, although Proklos tries to silence and reject Plutarch for his metaphysical and cosmological conceptions, he nevertheless relies on him when – as in this instance – he needs to resume and employ theoretical models of explanation developed not by Plato himself (as it happens for the generation of the world soul), but within the Platonic tradition after Plato, of which the Chaeronean is a crucial representative and advocate.

#### 4      Simplikios and Plutarch

Simplikios (c. 480–c. 560 AD), originally from Cilicia, studied in Alexandria with Ammonius Hermiae and in Athens with Damaskios.<sup>47</sup> He lived the dramatic moment of the closure of the Platonic school in Athens and was expelled from the city together with other Platonists in 532 AD, after Justinian's ban in 529. After his trip to Persia with Damaskios (531/532 AD), Simplikios' biography becomes nebulous. It is nevertheless certain that he engaged in a strenuous, quasi-solidary, activity as commentator, but only few of his works have survived in full: his *Commentaries* on Aristotle's *De caelo*, *Categories*, *Physics*, *De anima* (probably spurious) and on Epictetus' *Handbook*. He was influenced by Proklos and Porphyry, and believed that there was a fundamental doctrinal "harmony" (*symphōnia*) between Plato and Aristotle.

<sup>46</sup> See also Pl. *Smp.* 202e; *Plt.* 260d.

<sup>47</sup> For a full account of Simplikios' life, works and methodology, see the recent study by Baltussen (2008).

In Epictetus, Simplikios probably found an example of how to apply abstract philosophical principles in everyday life and especially of how to conduct a serene existence even under hostile regimes and in difficult political situations. Epictetus himself was in fact banished from Rome after Domitian's *Senatus consultum* in 94 AD and forced to escape to Nicopolis, where he founded his school. Simplikios, more generally, exploits Epictetus' *Handbook* as a literary occasion for reflecting on the civic and social role of the philosopher.

The choice for a Platonist to comment on a Stoic manual of ethics may be surprising, especially if we consider the opposition and vigorous debate between the Stoics and the Platonists during the Imperial age (Porphyry, Proklos and our Plutarch are excellent examples in this regard).<sup>48</sup> Simplikios nevertheless appreciates Epictetus' *Handbook* as a precious didactic tool for ethics and an extremely effective guide for virtuous life. While mostly neglecting, and seldom counteracting, Stoic metaphysical doctrines, Simplikios extracts useful practical instructions from Epictetus' work. He includes them within a Platonic theoretical structure and even associates them with Platonic ritual practices (such as theurgy). His moral theory, as the following textual examples will show, resembles the views of Porphyry and Proklos: pleasure, materiality and bodily sensibility must be discarded, in favour of a life of purity and virtue that leads to ascending to the intelligible Good.

The two cases that I am going to analyse correspond to the only two places of the *Commentary* where Plutarch is directly called into question.

Simp. *in Epict.* 129.18–22: Indeed, even our enemies have two handles; and it is possible to benefit from them as well, since they put our emotions to very bitter trials, and make us become more secure. (In fact, Plutarch of Chaeronea wrote a whole book *On Benefiting on one's Enemies*).

Eng. Trans. BRITTAINE-BRENNAN, 2002

This extract belongs to a passage where Simplikios is discussing Epictetus' proposition: "Every object has two handles, one of them bearable, the other unbearable".<sup>49</sup> Simplikios explains that all sensible beings are composed "of contraries" (*ex enantioīn*): on the one hand, they are in "harmony" (*sympōnia*) and "tolerable" (*phorēta*); on the other, they diverge and are unbearable. Simplikios appeals to the authority of Plutarch the "moralist" for proving that,

<sup>48</sup> For Plutarch's criticism against Stoic ethics, see his treatise *On moral virtue*. For his complex and multifaceted relationship with the Stoics, see especially Babut (1969), and more recently Van Hoof (2010).

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Epict. *Ench.* 43.61.

since everything that is material, transient and mortal has a double face, we should choose the correct “handle” (*labeū*) in order to properly “handle” the manifold predicaments of life and benefit from them. He therefore quotes Plutarch’s enjoyable essay (and originally a rhetorical composition) *How to profit from your enemies*, which is rich in sensible advice and common sense, and also had great resonance among the Christian authors.

Plutarch is summoned again, together with other illustrious representatives of the philosophical symposiastic tradition, when Simplikios wants to explain another morally acceptable behaviour in everyday life.

Simp. *in Epict.* 114.38–45: The feasts of illustrious men relegate food and drinks and symposiastic amusements as incidentals; they are in fact associations and occupations with words, as made clear by the *Symposia* recorded by Plato, Xenophon, Plutarch and others. Most people’s feasts, however, resemble the feeding of irrational animals, in as much as they are directed towards indulgence and bodily enjoyment.

Eng. Trans. BRITTAINE-BRENNAN, 2002

Here Simplikios is analysing Epictetus’ lemma: “As for feasts, avoid those given in the outside world by ordinary people”.<sup>50</sup> He therefore draws a clear distinction between the “virtuous man”, who always exercises self-restraint and is in control of the rational part of his soul, and the “ordinary man” who, lacking philosophical education, is overwhelmed by irrationality and disorderly passions. Simplikios’ text continues with a peculiar exhortation concerning the event that, for whatsoever reason, the virtuous man is compelled to participate in a feast with vulgar men:

Simp. *in Epict.* 114.51–52: let the attentive part of your soul be fully awake, and let it be on guard to remain in itself.

Eng. Trans. BRITTAINE-BRENNAN, 2002

A principle identical to that of the first quotation (129.18–22) is here applied, and again we hear the echo of Plutarch: in dangerous conditions, when the wise man has to preserve his modesty and purity against the risk of becoming sullied (which corresponds to the “mixing of the impure with the pure”<sup>51</sup>), he should exert his rational power, since that will help him not just to be safe, but even to turn the situation to his own advantage. This is nevertheless achievable

<sup>50</sup> Epict. *Ench.* 33.6.

<sup>51</sup> Simpl. *in Epict.* 115.6–7.

just for those who have a solid moral disposition (*prohairesis*) and are detached from disturbing passions and irrational factors.

Although a thorough analysis of Simplikios' metaphysical theory would show its profound incompatibility with that of Plutarch (especially as concerns Simplikios' definition of "evil" as a *parhypostasis* – i.e., as something that does not exist on its own, but depends on something else for its existence –, which follows that of Proklos), the Neoplatonist nevertheless appears to hold the Chaeronean as an authority for indicating the right conduct in some practical cases. What is more, Simplikios recalls Plutarch's writings and wisdom as precious sources of positive didactic exempla to support his own ethical maxim: bodily temptation brings us down and prevents our ascent to the intelligible realm.

## 5 Conclusion

Recalling Simplikios' invitation to taking advantage from different situations, we can conclude that all the Neoplatonists here considered judiciously took advantage of Plutarch's works in order to justify their own philosophical reflection and to redefine their relationship with the Platonic tradition. Despite discarding some of Plutarch's metaphysical theories, they exploited his legacy according to their own ideological and historical context.

Exploring the reception of Plutarch of Chaeronea in Porphyry, Proklos and Simplikios has helped us to discern some continuous strands of thought within Imperial Platonism, notwithstanding the considerable originality and theoretical innovations which have inevitably emerged in a time span of four centuries. In this regard, it might be useful to recall that Plutarch himself was an advocate of the unity of Platonism under the aegis of its illustrious founder, as proven by the existence of his treatise *On the unity of the Academy from Plato* (no. 63 of the Lamprias catalogue), which is unfortunately lost.

The Neoplatonists also share Plutarch's fundamental conviction that Plato's works enclose a coherent system of doctrines that await to be recovered and, motivated by this, engage in an impressive activity of synthesis, exegesis and teaching of his dialogues, perceived as an extraordinary source of knowledge. In their constant and passionate re-reading of the past and of their own tradition, Plutarch emerges as an animate figure and a dynamic interlocutor. He is not simply a motionless icon. Rather, he is kept in life through the Platonists' strenuous effort of re-thinking and re-discovering their own history and heritage.

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# On Donkeys, Weasels and New-Born Babies, or What Damaskios Learned from Plutarch

*Geert Roskam*

## 1 Damaskios, the Last Link of the “Golden Chain”

Although there is relatively little we know with absolute certainty about Damaskios' life, at least the broad outlines of it can be reconstructed.<sup>1</sup> He was born around 460 AD in Damascus in a wealthy family, and began to study rhetoric at an early age in Alexandria, where he got in touch with the *fine fleur* of the intellectual circles. At that early moment already, he may have become acquainted with Plutarch's works. In 491/492 AD, he gave up his rhetorical career and definitively turned to philosophy, influenced by his teacher Isidorus. We then find him back in Athens, where he studied philosophy with Zenodotus in Marinus' Neoplatonic school. At that moment, Plato's Academy had long been abandoned, and the new Neoplatonic school at Athens was situated in a rich house in the centre of the city, at the foot of the Acropolis. It was there that Damaskios was fully introduced to Plato's philosophy, or better, to Proklos' understanding of Plato's philosophy. And in all likelihood, he could there again find copies of Plutarch's writings in the private library of the school.

Later, he probably returned together with Isidorus to Alexandria, where he followed the courses of Heliodorus and Ammonius. Meanwhile, the Neoplatonic school at Athens passed, after the death of Proklos and his successor Marinus, through a deep crisis. We lack detailed information about what was happening there, but if we may believe Damaskios, the situation was catastrophic: “we had never heard of philosophy being so despised in Athens as we saw it dishonoured in the time of Hegias”.<sup>2</sup> In 515 at the latest, Damaskios was back in Athens, where he had become the new head of the Neoplatonic school. There, he began the difficult task of putting a stop to the decline of the school. He re-emphasised the importance of philosophical theoretical reflection and pursued a new balance between philosophy and the hieratic, theurgic

<sup>1</sup> The best discussion is Hoffmann (1994); cf. also Athanassiadi (1999: 19–57).

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Isidorus*, E220 Zintzen = fr. 145A Ath.; the translations from the *Life of Isidorus* are borrowed from Athanassiadi (1999).

practices that had gradually overgrown the school (cf. *In Phd.* 1.172). And our evidence suggests that he actually succeeded in bringing about a remarkable revival of the school.

Yet Damaskios' success was not meant to last. In 529 AD, Justinian promulgated his famous edict that forbade the teaching of philosophy (John Malalas, *Chron.* 18.47). The Neoplatonic school at Athens was forced to close,<sup>3</sup> and when even its property risked being confiscated, Damaskios departed with six fellow Neoplatonists to the Persian king Chosroes. They were attracted by the good reputation of the Persian empire and its new king Chosroes, who was reported to be sincerely interested in philosophy. Moreover, by leaving the Christian Roman empire, the pagan philosophers could reasonably expect that they would be allowed to continue their teaching.<sup>4</sup> Yet they soon became disappointed and already in 532 they left again. In a famous clause of the *Pax perpetua* between the Roman and Persian empire, it was stipulated that the seven philosophers should have the freedom to maintain their pagan convictions. The Neoplatonists returned, but we do not know where they went: Athens, Alexandria, or Harran have all been suggested, but there is no compelling evidence for any of them.<sup>5</sup>

Damaskios may well have returned to his hometown. This, at least, is suggested by the last testimony we have about the philosopher: a stele that was discovered in Emesa and that contains a funerary epigram for a slave woman Zosime. Fortunately enough, the epigram has also been preserved in the *Anthologia Palatina* (7, 553), where it is ascribed to Damaskios. This may indicate that the old philosopher indeed returned to his native country and that he there spent the last years of his life. With his death, the “Golden Chain” of distinguished Platonists that was supposed to go back to Plato himself was finally broken.

## 2 Damaskios’ Works and Thinking

Damaskios is the author of a varied œuvre, the principal part of which consists of penetrating commentaries on Plato’s dialogues. His *Commentaries* on the *Phaedo*, the *Philebus* and the *Parmenides* are still extant, but we know

<sup>3</sup> On these much discussed events, see esp. the seminal article of Cameron (1969); cf. also Blumenthal (1978) and Watts (2004).

<sup>4</sup> A thorough discussion of the Persian journey of the seven philosophers can be found in Hartmann (2002).

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., Luna (2001) and Watts (2005).

that he also wrote commentaries on other dialogues (such as the *Timaeus*, the *Republic*, the *Phaedrus* and so on). His treatise *On number, place and time* is quoted by Simplikios, and he probably also composed a few commentaries on Aristotle's works. Furthermore, he wrote four books of *Paradoxa*, a mixed collection of miracles which gave him the label of credulity,<sup>6</sup> although the work should rather be understood against the background of the Neoplatonic interest in such manifestations of the divine. This interest can also be found in the *Life of Isidorus*, to which we shall return in due course.

Damaskios' *magnum opus* is *On first principles*, or, as the full title goes, *Doubts and solutions concerning first principles*. This is not the place to deal with Damaskios' philosophy in detail.<sup>7</sup> Here it suffices to say that he places above the One yet another "principle", that is, "the ineffable" (*to arrhēton*), and that he, at the level of the One, distinguishes between a "One-Everything" (*hen panta*) and an "Everything-One" (*panta hen*), which is then followed by the level of the "Unified" (*hēnōmenon*) (*De princ.* 2.39.8–25 Westerink). This conceptual division of the highest level(s) of reality enables Damaskios to gain a deeper understanding of the transition from the One to the realm of plurality. At the same time, this extremely sophisticated thinking is coupled with intellectual caution. This especially appears from his repeated warnings that he only speaks about principles *kat' endeixin*, that is, merely hinting at them rather than completely revealing their nature.<sup>8</sup> Damaskios clearly broke new ground in his *On first principles*, although he wanted to return to the position of Iamblichos, against the later innovations of Proklos.<sup>9</sup>

Damaskios' *On first principles* is the highly impressive result of an age-old, mature Neoplatonic tradition. At first glance, it is not to be expected that such a work, and Damaskios' philosophy in general, was deeply influenced by Plutarch. It is true, of course, that both Plutarch and Damaskios belonged to the Platonic tradition, but more than four centuries separate the one from the other, and this temporal distance can be felt on every page they wrote. Their interpretative and exegetical frameworks are different, as are their general approaches and their philosophical agendas. Yet, in spite of all these fundamental differences, Plutarch is explicitly named in two of Damaskios' extant works.

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<sup>6</sup> Zeller (1903: 902).

<sup>7</sup> Excellent surveys can be found in Van Riel (2002) and (2010); cf. also Combès (1989) and Vlad (2004). The most recent lengthy discussion of *On first principles* is Metry-Tresson (2012).

<sup>8</sup> Van Riel (2002: 202); Rappe (1998a: 113–114) and (1998b: 361) (Rappe connects Damaskios' position with the sceptical tradition).

<sup>9</sup> On the opposition between Damaskios and Proklos, see Combès (1987).

### 3      The *Life of Isidorus*

The first one is Damaskios' *Life of Isidorus*. At first sight, Plutarch's presence in this work is not very surprising, and one might be tempted to regard it as a further testimony of the great importance which the *Parallel lives* had for the biographical genre in late antiquity. On closer inspection, however, the matter is far less evident, for as we shall see, the two works, which are separated by several centuries, are radically different.

The *Life of Isidorus* is a particularly interesting source for the intellectual life at Alexandria and Athens in Damaskios' day. Unfortunately, the work has not been transmitted entirely, but it can partly be reconstructed on the basis of a series of excerpts in Photios' *Bibliotheca* (codex 242), completed by material from the *Suda*. Since the *Life of Isidorus* in all likelihood focused on Damaskios' teacher, it is misleading to characterise it as a kind of philosophical *Who's Who*,<sup>10</sup> and the alternative title *Philosophical history* that can be found in the *Suda* (II, 4.1–2 Adl.; cf. Photios, *Bibl. cod. 181*, 126a8–12) is not entirely accurate in this respect.<sup>11</sup> One could rightly object that the *Life* contains a great many passages about other contemporary philosophers, but such information is not necessarily irrelevant for the principal focus of the *Life*, providing as it does the necessary background for an intellectual portrait of Isidorus. Moreover, Photios already remarked that the *Life* is full of digressions (cod. 181, 126a12–13), and Damaskios himself repeatedly considers several of his comments digressive.<sup>12</sup> The *Life of Isidorus* certainly has more than one dimension, but the figure of Isidorus was no doubt its unifying factor.

When we compare Damaskios' *Life of Isidorus* with Plutarch's *Parallel lives*, we immediately come across many striking differences. In fact, we have to do with two radically different projects. First of all, the two authors have completely different purposes. It is well-known that Plutarch's *Lives* have a moral purpose: they provide the reader with fascinating examples of great figures of the past, whose virtuous actions should stimulate the reader's admiration and lead to imitation and emulation (*Per. 1.1–2.4*). This is not to say, of course, that the reader should simply copy the accomplishments of an Alexander or slavishly ape the decisions of a Pericles – that would be impossible anyhow. But their choices and behaviour may be a useful starting point for further reflection and may as such influence our own moral course. Plutarch's *Lives* often

<sup>10</sup> Thus Athanassiadi (1993: 2) and (1999: 62).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Brisson (2001: 275).

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., frgs. E6 Zintzen = 5A Ath.; E159 Zintzen = 103A Ath.; E175 Zintzen = 116A Ath.

raise difficult moral questions and challenge the reader rather than offering ready-made answers.<sup>13</sup>

Damaskios' *Life of Isidorus*, on the contrary, should be understood within the framework of the established Neoplatonic tradition where gifted pupils who succeeded their teacher wrote a biography of him. Obvious examples are Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* and Marinus' *Life of Proklos*. In that sense, the *Life of Isidorus* is a pagan hagiography of a beloved master. It is, however, more than that. In a brilliant article, Franco Trabattoni has argued that the *Life of Isidorus* should also be understood as a kind of programmatic manifesto.<sup>14</sup> Damaskios there subtly defends his own reformation program of the Neoplatonic school at Athens. More particularly, he cleverly establishes a connection between, on the one hand, his strategy of introducing new Alexandrian blood into the Athenian circle and his emphasis on philosophical reflection as opposed to the theurgic excesses, and, on the other hand, the philosophical profile and authority of his teacher Isidorus and through him even those of Proklos and Marinus. Damaskios' *Life of Isidorus*, then, is as much an enthusiastic eulogy of his master as a sophisticated *apologia pro se*.

Further, both authors opt for a different kind of hero. Plutarch writes biographies of famous statesmen and generals, and thus gives attention to virtue in action. In other words, the scene of the *Lives* is nearly always that of the *vita activa*. Damaskios, on the contrary, deals with intellectuals and philosophers, many of whom preferred a sequestered life.<sup>15</sup> His focus is usually on the *vita contemplativa* that avoids involvement in politics,<sup>16</sup> and from such a point of view, Plutarch's heroes are no longer interesting as paradigmatic models of virtuous behaviour. This choice for different heroes also entails different sources. Plutarch usually had to consult many sources and check the reliability of different accounts. The distinction that he made between history and biography in the famous proem to the *Life of Alexander* (1.1) did not imply that he had no concern for historical truth.<sup>17</sup> Damaskios had an easier task: he had been an eyewitness to many events and had heard other things from Isidorus himself. At the beginning of his *Life of Isidorus*, he briefly explains his method: he will write "not with the zeal which strives for absolute accuracy in argument, but according to the rules of biography, putting forward only what I believe

<sup>13</sup> See the fundamental study of Duff (1999).

<sup>14</sup> Trabattoni (1985).

<sup>15</sup> E.g., fr. E66 Zintzen = 51C Ath.; 284 Zintzen = 109 Ath.; 125 Zintzen = 123A Ath.; 186 Zintzen = 133 Ath.

<sup>16</sup> For Damaskios' thinking of the *vita contemplativa*, see Van Riel (2012). That Damaskios was not blind to the merits of the *vita activa* appears from fr. 325 Zintzen = 124 Ath.

<sup>17</sup> See on this Pelling (2002: 143–170).

to be true and what I have heard from my master" (E8 Zintzen = 6A Ath.; cf. also E111 Zintzen = 78D Ath.). The two authors, then, use sources of a different kind, but they both adopt a similar combination of the biographical genre with truth claims.

The fundamentally different purposes also entail different approaches and methods. Plutarch's *Lives* are *Parallel lives*. Each pair confronts a Greek hero with his Roman counterpart and in this way stimulates moral reflection. The importance of Plutarch's comparative approach, which is not confined to the concluding *synkrisis* (brief formal comparisons of the two protagonists which are added at the end of most pairs) but can be felt throughout the whole pair of *Lives*, is now generally recognised. Such comparative method cannot be found in Damaskios' *Life of Isidorus*, at least not as a general structuring principle. And when it occasionally occurs, for instance in several pairs of contrasting brothers,<sup>18</sup> it still differs from the much more subtle and detailed comparisons that we find in Plutarch. Damaskios' characterisation in such cases often rests on a black and white approach that, *mutatis mutandis*, at best recalls the formal Plutarchan *synkrisis*.<sup>19</sup> Damaskios evaluates the different characters on the basis of some general standards of excellence and virtue, but in a way that is more static and schematic than what we find in Plutarch. This is further illustrated by their different views of the shortcomings of their respective heroes. In a celebrated passage from the proem to the *Life of Cimon*, Plutarch states that he regards the bad deeds of his heroes as "shortcomings in some particular virtue" (*elleimata aretēs tinos*) rather than as "vile products of positive vice" (*kakias ponēreumata*; *Cim.* 2,5). This is a constructive, benevolent approach that fits in with the practical purpose of the *Parallel lives*: the heroes should always retain their status of paradigmatic models, so that the reader can model himself after their example (which – it should be repeated – is not the same as slavishly imitating them). Again, Damaskios' approach is fundamentally different, for he deals with his characters in a much more critical way. This already offended Photios, who remarks (*Bibl. cod. 181*, 126a18–24):

Over all those whom he extols in his account, and celebrates as having risen above the human condition through their perfect theoretical knowledge and quick intelligence, he then sets himself up as judge, not

<sup>18</sup> O'Meara (2006: 82–83).

<sup>19</sup> This characterisation was perhaps influenced by the Neoplatonic doctrine of the ladder of virtues (*scala virtutum*) (O'Meara 2006), although not to the same extent that we find in Marinus. There can also be established some parallels with the psychotherapeutic philosophical tradition (Masullo 1987), but of course, the *Life of Isidorus* is not intended as a straightforward therapy of passions.

leaving a single one of those on whom he has lavished praise without some deficiency.

Several scholars agree with Photios' view,<sup>20</sup> and if they are right, Damaskios' general attitude is diametrically opposed to that of Plutarch. Instead of a benevolent and constructive judgement, he would have adopted an overcritical stance that was apparently not devoid of self-love. Yet there is ample room for a more charitable view. First, there is at least one fragment in which Damaskios himself claims to speak "not in an aggressive spirit (*machētikōs*), as one does in a law court, but "calmly" (*praoteron*)" (fragment E8 Zintzen = 6A Ath.). Second, one may see his straightforward evaluations as sincere attempts to accurately assess a character's real qualities and shortcomings. The *Life of Isidorus*, then, is neither a simple *laudatio* or panegyric nor a vitriolic invective, but rests on the sober-minded evaluation of a keen philosopher who critically analyses and judges the conduct of the different characters, realising very well that perfection is beyond human beings. In that sense, Damaskios' attitude indeed still differs from that of Plutarch, but it is no less constructive.

The different goals and methods of both works also imply different target readers. Plutarch in all likelihood wrote his *Parallel lives* primarily for aristocratic *pepaideumenoī* who participated at a local level in municipal politics or were even involved in the administration of their province.<sup>21</sup> Damaskios rather focuses on his own school. If Trabattoni is correct, his message is especially relevant for fellow Platonists in the school of Athens. Moreover, this difference in target readers is indeed perfectly confirmed by the different profile of the two dedicatees. The *Parallel lives* are dedicated to Sosius Senecio, one of the leading politicians in Plutarch's day.<sup>22</sup> The *Life of Isidorus*, on the contrary, is dedicated to Theodora, one of Damaskios' own students (Photios, *Bibl. cod. 181, 125b33–41*). Yet the difference between both authors on this point is only a relative one. For there can be little doubt that Plutarch's *Parallel lives* were also of particular relevance for his own students,<sup>23</sup> whereas Damaskios' *Life of Isidorus* could also be read by influential pagans who were interested in what happened in the Neoplatonic school and who might even consider joining Damaskios' circle, inspired by the example of Isidorus' impressive accomplishments.

Up to this point, we have mainly underlined the great differences between both authors. There can, however, also be found several similarities, even if

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., Zeller (1903: 903); Strömberg (1946: 191); Westerink (1971: 254).

<sup>21</sup> See esp. Stadter (1988: 292–293) and (1997: 69–70).

<sup>22</sup> On Sosius Senecio, see, e.g. Jones (1971: 54–57) and Puech (1992: 4883).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Lamberton (2001: 73–74 and 139–140); Roskam (2005: 334).

these usually reflect a common intellectual tradition rather than a like-minded philosophical project. Both, for instance, combine their enthusiasm for Plato's philosophy with an interest in the Egyptian religion.<sup>24</sup> The topic of flattery and frankness in Damaskios' fragments E18 and 18 Zintzen (= 15AB Ath.) recalls Plutarch's treatise *On friends and flatterers*, and his quotation from Xenophon (*Oec.* 1.15) that the good man can even benefit from those who attempt to harm him (fragment 329 Zintzen = 127C Ath.) reminds one of the Plutarchan essay *How to profit from your enemies*.<sup>25</sup> In none of these cases, however, can a direct Plutarchan influence on Damaskios be demonstrated and, in my view, it is even quite unlikely that Damaskios there has Plutarch in mind.

Another point of similarity are the many digressions about antiquarian topics that can be found in both authors. This may be connected with the great erudition, *paideia* and *polymatheia* of both authors, yet here too, some fundamental differences can be found, as is suggested by fragment E40 and 86 Zintzen (= 37E Ath.). There, Damaskios states that Isidorus had great problem-solving capacities, but that he did not use "mere erudition (*polymatheia*) and the relating of other people's opinions to bury and conceal the truth and to silence his questioners" (cf. also fragment 80 Zintzen = fr. 35B Ath.). In this respect, he radically differs from most speakers in Plutarch's *Table talk*, who precisely rely on their impressive *paideia* to solve the questions that have been raised. And they would definitely not regard this approach as a mere strategy to conceal the truth. In Damaskios then *paideia* is not unequivocally positive: it is to be appreciated, though, when it is part of a philosophical project, but is less important than the pursuit of knowledge of the divine.<sup>26</sup>

This is important for a correct evaluation of the only passage from the *Life of Isidorus* where Plutarch is mentioned by name (fragment E64 Zintzen = 51A Ath.):

There was a donkey too, as Plutarch of Chaeronea reports ("ὅς Πλούταρχος ὁ Χαιρόνευς φέσιν"), who, when Tiberius was still a youth studying rhetoric in Rhodes, foretold his reign in the same manner (*dia tou autou pathēmatos*).

<sup>24</sup> For Plutarch, see esp. his *On Isis and Osiris*; an excellent discussion of all relevant material can be found in Hani (1976). For Damaskios, see esp. fr. E1–5 and 2–4 Zintzen (= 1–4 Ath.).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. the phrase *pros alkēn etraponto ek tou anagkaiou* ("they turned and resisted out of necessity") in fr. 319 Zintzen (= 126E Ath.), which can be compared to Plutarch, *Demetr.* 48.1 (*hyp' anagkēs trepetai pros alkēn*; "through necessity, he turns and resists"). It is far from certain, however, whether this fragment can be traced back to Damaskios.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Fowden (1982: 36).

The phrase *dia tou autou pathēmatos* refers to the story that immediately precedes this one and deals with the horse of Severus which foretold his consulship by emitting many huge sparks from its body. Apparently, Tiberius' donkey had the same prophetic powers.

This information cannot be found in one of the extant works of the *Corpus Plutarcheum*, and Damaskios unfortunately does not tell us where he read it. The lost *Life of Tiberius* (Lamprias catalogue no. 27) is perhaps the most obvious, but by no means the only possible alternative. We may presume that the rich library of the Neoplatonic school at Athens possessed a copy of all of Plutarch's works and that Damaskios probably knew the work from personal reading.

Damaskios' reference to Plutarch in this context illustrates his wide reading. Damaskios was no Proklos, who would only allow the *Chaldaean oracles* and Plato's *Timaeus* to circulate, while concealing all other books (Marinus, *Life of Proklos* 38).<sup>27</sup> Nor could he be compared with Sarapio, who only owned two or three books (fragment 287 Zintzen = 111 Ath.), or with Isidorus, who had not read many books (fragment 87 Zintzen = 37E Ath.). Damaskios in fact shows a much broader interest. As a *pepaideumenos*, he was also familiar with Polybius<sup>28</sup> and Thucydides,<sup>29</sup> whose works he probably read as a student of rhetoric. His knowledge of this passage from Plutarch may well find its origin in this early stage of his career too.<sup>30</sup> However that may be, the information which Damaskios derives from Plutarch does not influence his more fundamental philosophical outlook or method: it merely concerns an interesting piece of knowledge, a *curiosum* that deserves mention.

And we can easily see what made it so interesting for Damaskios. He was fascinated by all kind of miracle stories and we have already seen that he wrote a monograph on that topic (*Paradoxa*, in four books). It is not unreasonable to suppose that he even mentioned the strange phenomenon of Tiberius' donkey there too. In any case, Damaskios' paradoxographic writing should be understood against the background of his Neoplatonic thinking that aimed at a well-considered integration of philosophical reflection and hieratic practices. At the moment when the last strongholds of paganism were gradually withering away, such stories about the workings and the manifest influence of the old

<sup>27</sup> Dodds (1963: xiii) correctly remarks that “[i]t does not mean that the most learned Hellenist of his day wished to make a holocaust of Greek literature; he only wished to restrict its circulation for the time being to the initiates of Neoplatonism”.

<sup>28</sup> Fragment 302 Zintzen = 114C Ath.

<sup>29</sup> See fr. 307 Zintzen (= 119L Ath.; cf. Thucydides 1.21.1) and 345 Zintzen (= 140B Ath.; cf. Thuc. 1.138.3).

<sup>30</sup> That the study of Plutarch was part of a man's general *paideia* in the fourth century AD is stated by Himerius (*Ecl.* 7.4).

pagan gods were *gefundenes Fressen* (i.e. sensational news) for all those who still resisted the Christian belief and preferred to stick to the ancestral tradition. In other words, all such stories, including the one about Tiberius' donkey, are welcome support for Damaskios' Neoplatonic pagan beliefs.

#### 4      The *Commentary on Plato's Phaedo*

Plutarch is also mentioned in Damaskios' *Commentary on Plato's Phaedo*.<sup>31</sup> This complex work has come down to us in two different versions. More precisely, these two versions consist of lecture notes written down by two students at different occasions. From these, we can infer that Damaskios systematically discussed the successive argumentative sections of the *Phaedo* in his class. More extensive and detailed discussions are followed by short lemmatic comments and a survey of Plato's arguments in the form of syllogisms. One version of the commentary even contains a complete monograph by Damaskios on the argument from opposites (*In Phd.* 1.207–252). In our context, it is especially Damaskios' discussion of the argument from recollection that is important. Damaskios begins this part with a general treatment of the topic of recollection (1.253–261 ~ 2.4–11) and then provides an analysis of the argument in the *Phaedo* (1.262–274 ~ 2.12–23). This analysis is followed by a series of extracts from Plutarch (1.275–292 ~ 2.28) and a few additional exegetic observations (1.293–310; in 2, these observations precede the extracts from Plutarch: 24–27).

Let us now have a closer look at these extracts from Plutarch. Damaskios derives from Plutarch a long list of arguments that support the Platonic doctrine according to which learning is recollection. These arguments are not listed at random, but can be divided in groups that show some thematic affinity. Furthermore, it is striking that both *reportatores* (i.e. the students who made the notes) of Damaskios' course on the *Phaedo* mention the arguments in an opposite order:

- version I:
  - critical *status quaestionis*: rejection of Arcesilaus' view and of the Stoic position; Plato as the only unproblematic explanation: 1.275–277 (= Plutarch, fr. 215a–c Sandbach)
  - a theoretical perspective: knowledge is hidden under extraneous things; the paradox of seeking and finding as an argument for the doctrine of recollection (including criticism of the Peripatetic, Stoic and Epicurean views): 1.278–280 (= fr. 215d–f)

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<sup>31</sup> For this section, I heavily rely on Roskam (2012), where more details can be found.

- linguistic and etymological arguments: *a-lētheia*, *Mnēmosynē*, and everyday language (*lanthanō*): 1.281–283 (= fr. 215g–i)
- arguments from experience and daily life: recollection of previous lives and instances of a strange phobia (of weasels, lizards, tortoises, cocks etc.): 1.284–287 (= fr. 215j–m)
- new-born babies (angry-looking, but laughing in their sleep) and natural abilities: 1.288–290 (= fr. 216a–c)
- reflections about the process of thinking: its inward orientation and the delight in discoveries: 1.291–292 (= fr. 216d–e)

**version II:**

- reflections about the process of thinking: we think from one thing to the next and we supply what is wanting in sensible things: 2.28.3–5 (= fr. 217a–b)
- new-born babies (laughing in their sleep), children, natural abilities: 2.28.6–11 (= fr. 217c–f)
- the argument from daily life: strange phobia (e.g. of a weasel or a cock): 2.28.12–13 (= fr. 217g)
- a theoretical perspective: the paradox of finding: 2.28.14–15 (= fr. 217h)
- linguistic and etymological arguments: *a-lētheia*, *Mnēmosynē*: 2.28.16–19 (= fr. 217i–j)
- a theoretical perspective: the paradox of seeking; the results of reflection are found in the soul: 2.28.20–23 (= fr. 217k–l)

Damaskios' use of Plutarch in these two versions of his *Commentary on Plato's Phaedo* has received much attention. Especially the authenticity of the fragments has been much discussed, and the scholarly world is divided between believers and non-believers. On the one hand, Jan Opsomer, among many others, has questioned the authenticity on the basis of both the content and the style of the fragments.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, Rosa Aguilar<sup>33</sup> has brought forward many arguments in support of the authenticity (e.g. the Platonic perspective, the preference for etymological speculations, the taste for anecdotes, and the psychological subtleness). In a recent article,<sup>34</sup> I have myself argued that the ordering of the fragments probably reflects the process of Damaskios' own reading and excerpting, which implies that they can indeed be traced back to Plutarch.

<sup>32</sup> Opsomer (1998: 200–203); cf. also Zeller (1903: 808–809, n. 3) and Ziegler (1951: 752–753).

<sup>33</sup> Aguilar (2003); cf. also Sandbach (1969: 388–389); Westerink (1977: 166–167); Bonazzi (2010: 76–77).

<sup>34</sup> Roskam (2012: 478–485).

In the present context, however, the difficult problem of the fragments' authenticity is perhaps less important. In fact, both *reportatores* independently refer to Plutarch of Chaeronea, and whether or not this ascription is correct, their agreement in any case strongly suggests that Damaskios himself referred in his teaching to Plutarch of Chaeronea. And if Damaskios himself was thus apparently convinced that he here dealt with Plutarchan material, the passage in any case becomes relevant for his reception of Plutarch. The question as to whether he indeed excerpted these arguments himself, as I believe, or rather took them from an earlier source (whether reliable or not) is therefore of secondary importance in this context.

We cannot be sure about the Plutarchan work which contained these fragments. It is unlikely that Plutarch already wrote a full-fledged commentary on the *Phaedo*.<sup>35</sup> Damaskios in all likelihood found the arguments elsewhere, which once again illustrates his broad reading. As possible sources, I have already mentioned:<sup>36</sup>

- *What is understanding* (Lamprias catalogue no. 144; cf. also no. 146: *That understanding is impossible*)
- *How shall we determine truth?* (Lamprias catalogue no. 225)
- *An introduction to the soul, in three volumes* (Lamprias catalogue no. 48)
- *Solutions of problems* (Lamprias catalogue no. 170)

We may now add even more possibilities:

- *Academic lectures* (Lamprias catalogue no. 134)
- *That the Academic philosophy allows for the reality of prophecy* (Lamprias catalogue no. 71; cf. also no. 131).<sup>37</sup>

But all this obviously remains highly speculative, and it is much more interesting to examine how Plutarch is read by Damaskios. In this case, Plutarch is quoted in the context of a theoretical discussion, and Damaskios' interest is in the core of his philosophical arguments. He omits almost all literary embellishments and reduces anecdotes to their bare essence: it is the argument that counts, and nothing else. The fact that the two *reportatores* have written down the list indicates that Damaskios continued to regard this Plutarchan material as relevant, even after he had reworked and elaborated his course.

This brings forth our next question: why is Plutarch quoted in this section, given that he is, to say the least, no evident choice in this context? And his

<sup>35</sup> For Plutarch's reception of the *Phaedo*, see Roskam (2015) (where I also deal with *Cons. ad Apoll.* 120E).

<sup>36</sup> Roskam (2012: 491–492).

<sup>37</sup> This suggestion builds on the observation that Tiberius is both mentioned in the *Life of Isidorus* (in a context of prophecy) and in this passage from the *Commentary on Plato's Phaedo* (1.285; dealing with recollection).

presence here is even more surprising if we also take into account the overall structure of the *Commentary on Plato's Phaedo*. As stated above, Damaskios studies Plato's arguments in favour of the immortality of the soul one by one, and in each of these discussions, he also focuses on the view of one great predecessor:

argument from opposites:	Syrianus (1.183–206)
argument from recollection:	Plutarch (1.275–292 ~ 2.28)
argument from similarity:	Plotinus (1.311 ~ 2.29)
argument on harmony:	Aristotle (1.383–387; Strato in 2.63–65)
final argument:	Strato (1.431–448 ~ 2.78)

We immediately see that Plutarch is here in excellent company, and this is further revealed when we compare Damaskios' selection with Isidorus' list of philosophers who had succeeded in acquiring divine knowledge: Pythagoras, Plato, Iamblichos, Syrianus and Proklos. Other supremely gifted thinkers who, nevertheless, did not reach the same divine level were Aristotle, Chrysippus and Hierocles (fragment E36 Zintzen = 34D Ath.). Isidorus' list is not surprising at all from a Neoplatonic perspective, but it does raise questions with regard to Damaskios' choice of authorities in his *Commentary on Plato's Phaedo*. Why did he not mention Proklos and Iamblichos, and instead turned to less "divine" thinkers such as Aristotle, Strato and Plutarch? The answer should be sought in the general approach of the commentary and in the specific context of this argument. Damaskios did not need to include Proklos in this group of authorities, as his illustrious predecessor was his privileged source throughout the *Commentary* and the starting point for all kinds of philosophical discussions. In a certain sense, the *Commentary on Plato's Phaedo* is no less a commentary on Proklos' commentary on the *Phaedo*.<sup>38</sup> Iamblichos was less interesting in this particular context because his general interpretation of the *Phaedo* was not without problems.<sup>39</sup> Strato for his part had to be mentioned because he played a very important role in the history of the exegesis of the *Phaedo*, since he refuted at length Plato's proofs for the immortality of the soul and as such proved a formidable challenge for all later Platonists. In a systematic discussion of the *Phaedo*, then, Strato could not be ignored. The fact that Damaskios here includes Strato among the principal authorities while keeping silent about Iamblichos does not mean, then, that the latter is dethroned once and for all. It only shows the importance of the particular context, and the same holds

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Westerink (1971: 253); Van Riel (2010: 671).

<sup>39</sup> Damaskios alludes to Iamblichos "bold" interpretation of the *Phaedo* in *In Phd.* 1.207.

true for the mention of Plotinus, Aristotle and Plutarch. In one of Plutarch's works, Damaskios found an in-depth discussion of the Platonic doctrine of recollection, and he used this material as an additional theoretical background for his own general presentation of this doctrine in his commentary.

And thus, a few bits of Plutarch were brought into the Neoplatonic curriculum of Damaskios' school. We know that the *Phaedo* was usually read quite early in the curriculum.<sup>40</sup> At that early stage, the students were already introduced to the views of several distinguished thinkers, including the predecessors of Proklos and even of Iamblichos. The Neoplatonic school, so Damaskios seems to suggest, can look back on one age-old, uniform and rich tradition. At the same time, the discussion of the material taken from Plutarch (and from the other authorities) enables Damaskios to momentarily bracket his preoccupation with Proklos. It is true that he usually takes over the latter's philosophical questions and thus leaves the initiative to him, but in sections such as this one about Plutarch, Proklos for a while disappears into the background, whereas the floor is given to other philosophers. Damaskios probably agreed with Isidorus that "in the cause of the accumulation of true knowledge, no one ought to be despised" (fragment 77 Zintzen = 34D Ath.).

In this phase of the curriculum, Damaskios thus appreciated Plutarch as an interesting philosophical authority. In later phases, however, Plutarch will completely disappear from the scene. In Damaskios' *Commentaries on the Philebus* and the *Parmenides*, he is never mentioned, and as far as the latter is concerned, this is not surprising at all. In the whole of the extant *Corpus Plutarchicum*, Plato's *Parmenides* is mentioned only once.<sup>41</sup> On this point, Damaskios had obviously nothing to learn from Plutarch, and that must have been a serious defect in the eyes of the Neoplatonist: his predecessor had overlooked the very *Dialogue* that contained the culminating point of Plato's philosophy.

## 5 Conclusion

In the scholarly literature about Neoplatonism in general and Damaskios in particular, Plutarch is usually totally ignored, or, at best, ends up as a footnote. This is hardly surprising, since both authors lived in different worlds. Even if they both admired the "divine" Plato and eagerly endorsed his doctrines, their philosophical interests and methods were very different. It is safe to say,

<sup>40</sup> *Prol. in Plat. phil.* 26.33–34; cf. Festugière (1969).

<sup>41</sup> *De frat. am.* 484F (about Antiphon's presence in the *Parmenides*); cf. also *Quaest. plat.* 1002D (which alludes to *Prm.* 131b3–5).

then, that Plutarch was of minor importance for a correct understanding of Damaskios' philosophy.

Yet there can be no doubt that for Damaskios Plutarch meant more than an insignificant footnote. After all, he too was part and parcel of the venerable pagan tradition that was menaced in Damaskios' day. Every part of this tradition deserved to be protected and remembered. In this light, it is no coincidence that Plutarch's name occurs several times in Damaskios' works. The entire, age-old tradition of pagan thinking should be revitalised in order to put a stop to its decline.

But Plutarch could not rescue Damaskios' school. Nor could Iamblichos or Proklos. Yet Damaskios' repeated references to Plutarch do illustrate the latter's lasting relevance for the Platonic tradition, until the last days of the school. And if Plutarch, then, was more than a footnote to Damaskios, the latter in turn should be more than a footnote in the history of Plutarch's reception. Therefore the editors of the present volume were not only generous but also wise to grant him a whole chapter.

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# Plutarch in Stobaios

*Michele Curnis*

## 1 The *Anthologion* by Ioannes Stobaios

The most impressive surviving anthology of Greek literature in prose and in verse was compiled by John of Stobi (in Macedonia), commonly referred to as Ioannes Stobaios, who likely lived in the first half of the fifth century AD. No biographical information on this writer survives, and the chronology of his work can only be inferred from the *terminus post quem* of authors he includes in it. The last writer quoted in the *Anthologion*<sup>1</sup> is Iamblichos (died c. 330 AD), while the first to speak at length about Stobaios' work is Photios (about five centuries after) in his *Bibliotheca* (167). Thanks to Photios and the testimony of the *Suda* Lexicon, we know that the compiler of the *Anthologion* began his work in order to provide a basic and well-rounded education for his son Septimius.<sup>2</sup> It is, however, very difficult to define the cultural thought of Stobaios, because the anthologist never intervenes in order either to introduce a quote or to make a comment; in the unbroken succession of anthologised passages, individual texts are separated only by *lēmmata* (entries), and are grouped into different chapters. Furthermore, bar the dedicatory letter to his son (still known only indirectly, through the Photian synthesis), the voice of Stobaios is never truly distinguished in his anthology.<sup>3</sup> The fact that Ioannes is defined as a “shadowy figure” is not surprising: on the contrary, as Denis Michael Searby argues, “the ideal anthologist is, perhaps, that transparent author whose effects are only to be seen in the choice of selections, their arrangement and the headings under which they are grouped”. The structure of the work, the chapter titles, and the

<sup>1</sup> With this title transliterated from Greek and deriving from the item ‘Stobaios’ in *Suda* Lexicon (*iota* 466, ed. Adler 1928–1938: III 38) scholars refer to the whole work by John, structured in four books. The manuscript tradition has, however, preserved the text dividing it into two parts due to the large size of each book: the first two are known as *Eglogae physicae et ethicae*, the other two as *Florilegium*. Photios in the *Bibliotheca* (167, 12a, ed. Henry 1960: 149–159) uses other terms to indicate the title of the work: “*eklogai*”, “*apophthegmata*”, “*hypothēka*” (“quotations”, “sentences”, “precepts” to translate literally a series of technical terms with very precise meaning in gnomological literature; see Mansfeld 1990; Mansfeld-Runia 1997). On the complex editorial history of the *Anthologion*, see Curnis (2008).

<sup>2</sup> Piccione-Runia (2001); Piccione (2002).

<sup>3</sup> Curnis (2006).

entries of the *Anthologion* “represent Stobaeus’s sole authorial interventions”.<sup>4</sup> As a result of this fact, philological research has so far mainly focused on the relationship between the versions of the quoted texts found within the *Anthologion* and the direct tradition, in those cases where a comparative examination can be conducted. It has thus been established that the Stobaean anthology is based on different textual sources from the ones in which the surviving *corpora* of Greek authors (the so-called “direct tradition”) originated in the Middle Ages; consequently, it cannot be reduced to a simple “indirect tradition”.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the *Anthologion* itself should not be examined simply as a monumental *testimonium* of earlier Greek literature; before establishing a comparison between Stobaios’ quotes and their original source-texts we should seek to understand the purpose of the work and the principles according to which the compiler has constructed it.<sup>6</sup> In this regard, the chapter titles of the various books and the entries with which the anthologist introduces the individual excerpts are the most important structural elements.

When we come to the relationship between the *Anthologion* and the Plutarchan textual tradition, it is essential to make a historical-literary clarification: one should not seek to relate Plutarch of Chaeronea to John of Stobi as if they were two personalities with a well-defined intellectual authorship. Indeed, Plutarch has been credited with some works whose authenticity is doubtful (for example, the *Sayings of kings and commanders*)<sup>7</sup> and others that are undoubtedly spurious (for example, the *Minor parallels*, *On rivers*, *On Homer*);<sup>8</sup> excerpts from all these texts often appear in the *Anthologion*. In addition, the Stobaean collection is the only one that quotes pages from *On nobility*, clearly a very late work developed from the same anthological fragments.<sup>9</sup> In fact, an entire Plutarchan tradition exists that can be reconstructed solely thanks to the *Anthologion*, as Ioannes is the only one to cite fragments from works that he explicitly ascribes to Plutarch, such as *Is foreknowledge of future events useful?*, *Against pleasure*, *A depreciation of strength*, *A woman, too, should be educated*, *On love*, *On nobility*, *On quietude*, *On beauty*, *On the art of prophecy*, *On rage*, *Against wealth*, *On calumny*, *A letter on friendliness*. In the case of the work *On the soul*, besides the two substantial fragments present in the *Anthologion*, one can also find some extracts in Aulus Gellius

<sup>4</sup> Searby (2011: 23–24).

<sup>5</sup> It is more appropriate to speak of an “intermediate” tradition; see Curnis (2011: 71–76).

<sup>6</sup> Piccione (2003; 2004).

<sup>7</sup> Fuhrmann (1988: 3–15).

<sup>8</sup> Critical editions of these texts respectively in De Lazzer (2000), Dorda-De Lazzer-Pellizer (2003), Kindstrand (1990).

<sup>9</sup> Sandbach (1967: 86–87).

and Eusebios. On the other hand, only in the *Praeparatio evangelica* can one read two excerpts – one of which is very extensive – from *On the festival of images at Plataea*.

As with all the other authors cited in the *Anthologion*, the most difficult problem concerns the identification of Stobaios as the authorial presence behind the overall framework and the original textual choices, given that his identity has been obscured over the centuries, in the course of the various revisions undergone by the text. By its very nature, an anthology without commentary or captions, in which the quotations are spaced only by intertitles and entries, is constantly subject to variation: practically every new transcription can generate subtraction, condensation, addition, amplification, transposition, agglutination or separation of individual textual units with references that are different from the original ones. It should be highlighted in this respect that the current edition of Stobaios' text, dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is a typical product of German positivism and does not represent the real Stobaean manuscript tradition. The main interest of Curt Wachsmuth and Otto Hense, the editors of the *Anthologion*,<sup>10</sup> was to restore the text by Stobaios so that it could be as close as possible to the direct or indirect tradition of the cited authors, rather than investigating the textual originality and the concatenation of the choices. In light of this, my discussion of the relationship between the Plutarchan textual tradition and the Stobaean one will be based on the reconstruction of Wachsmuth and Hense, and refrain from speculating about predilections or intentions attributable to John's hypothetical "Ur-*Anthologion*". Ultimately, every "quantitative" conclusion regarding the consistency of Plutarch in Stobaios has value only if referring to the current edition and its manuscript tradition and not in absolute terms.<sup>11</sup>

## 2 Plutarch, Pseudo-Plutarch, Stobaios

A first, brief but comprehensive survey on the presence of Plutarch within the *Anthologion* dates back only to 1987 when, in the first volume of the *Moralia* for the "Collection des Universités de France", Jean Irigoin published an essay on the history of the text from antiquity to modern editions.<sup>12</sup> In these pages, Irigoin remarked that Stobaios had cited passages from eighteen different Plutarchan treatises received in the modern age through the direct tradition,

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<sup>10</sup> Wachsmuth-Hense (1884–1912).

<sup>11</sup> Piccione (1998).

<sup>12</sup> Irigoin (1987: CCXXXII–CCXXXIV).

and fragments from another fifteen which were lost; fifteen out of the eighteen treatises known thanks to the direct tradition and quoted by Stobaios are listed under numbers 75 to 130 in the so-called Lamprias Catalogue of Plutarch's works, that is, in the middle section of the important list of the 227 titles attributed to the writer that, according to tradition, can be traced back to Plutarch's son, Lamprias.<sup>13</sup> Seven of the eighteen treatises are already cited in the eighth book of a miscellanistic compilation by the fourth-century sophist Sopater of Apamea, now lost but fully described in one abstract of the *Bibliotheca* by Photios (161). Based on such comparisons, Irigoin speculated that between the fourth and fifth centuries AD, i.e. at least since the age of Sopater, the most appreciated Plutarchan treatises had been transcribed and grouped within single manuscripts becoming, thereby, more available than others to the work of anthologists, excerptors, compilers or mere readers. The *Anthologion* by Stobaios is the oldest surviving work containing nearly two hundred significant quotations from Plutarch (or rather, from the *corpus* that tradition attributes to him, because, very often, Stobaios transcribed pseudo-Plutarchan texts or extracts ascribable to Plutarch but without the author's name).<sup>14</sup> The style of Plutarchan quotations within the *Anthologion* varies: the excerptor may either refer to a specific title of Plutarch or cite a title without specifying that it is a Plutarchan work; he may attribute Plutarchan passages to a different author, or even transcribe a Plutarchan passage attributing it to the character Plutarch is talking about in the original work (this technique is manifested particularly in quotations of apophthegms and sentences).<sup>15</sup> Names and titles are always contained within each *lemma*, in accordance with the didactic element that underpins Stobaios' introduction of each quotation in the various chapters.<sup>16</sup>

The precise distinction between Plutarchan authority, i.e. the presence of a text which can certainly be attributed to Plutarch, and Plutarchan tradition, i.e. the presence of texts that resulted from revised material, or from titles

<sup>13</sup> Although the name is stated in the family, none of Plutarch's children was called Lamprias. The catalogue is transmitted by a group of *Moralia* manuscripts, the oldest of which is the Parisinus gr. 1678 (very damaged in the folia containing the list), a copy from the tenth century, on which a second hand of the twelfth century intervened to add the list; see Irigoin (1987: CCCIII–CCCXVIII for introduction and critical edition of the entire catalogue).

<sup>14</sup> In Book 7 of the *Saturnalia*, Macrobius too cites numerous passages of the *Table talk*'s Book 8, but without reference to the name of Plutarch: cf. Irigoin (1987: CCXXXII). See also Vamvouri Ruffy in this volume.

<sup>15</sup> Only half of the Plutarchan quotations bear the name of the writer of Chaeronea; see Piccione (1998: 167), also for the differentiation of the entries.

<sup>16</sup> The diversity of the *lemmata* (entries) is common to all the authors cited with great frequency by Stobaios; the issue has been widely dealt with by Piccione (1999).

attributed to Plutarch but that are later, is very important in order to appreciate the relationship between the *Anthologion* and its Plutarchan sources. The reader is faced with a paradox: on the one hand the author's reference is fundamental in gnomological literature because the name, especially of the person who carries the *gnōmē* (the very opinion), means authority (*ipse dixit*); yet very often this name does not coincide with that of the author who wrote, collected or inherited gnomological texts. On the other hand, writing under an ethical-didactic model entails that one tends to replace the author's name with that of the main character of a story, particularly when the biographical example is more useful than the story's literary or linguistic aspect. On the whole, didactic purposes (serving the aim of moral or philosophical education) tend to be much stronger in gnomological collections than philology and literary history.

Recent research posits a distance between the authentically Plutarchan works and the *Anthologion* by Stobaios, arguing that the latter should be more relatable to an ancient *corpus* of sententious literature (already a source for Plutarch) than to Plutarch himself. Moreover, the short Plutarchan passages in Stobaios are never completely identical to the original ones; besides such textual problems, they present differences in syntactic setting and choices of cohesion, typical of every anthology and sententious genre. Based on the observations of Rosa Maria Piccione,<sup>17</sup> we can certainly conclude that Stobaios used pseudo-Plutarchan texts, collections and selections with greater frequency than works attributed with certainty to the writer from Chaeronea. The question that arises, however, is whether the materials falsely attributed to Plutarch already enjoyed wide circulation under Plutarch's name at the time the anthologist used them. This is not a side issue, since its resolution might shed light on the importance ascribed to Plutarch's name between the fourth and fifth centuries AD, when gnomological collections with many Plutarchan extracts began to form.<sup>18</sup> The idea that the fame, authority and prestige of a "good writer" surrounding Plutarch in the Byzantine age already dates back to late antiquity is not demonstrable at all; the heterogeneity of lemmatic references in the *Anthologion* and, above all, the lack of attention to the precise reference of the *Moralia* would suggest otherwise.

Scholarship has in recent years focused especially on the question of the precise relationship between the direct tradition of pseudo-Plutarch's *Doctrines*

<sup>17</sup> Piccione (1998: 164–165).

<sup>18</sup> On the history of gnomological fragments that the anthological tradition has attributed to Plutarch, see Elter (1900–1904) and Sandbach (1969: 407–410). About gnomological sources of Stobaios, see Gourinat (2011: 146–153) for parallel texts between pseudo-Plutarch and Stobaios.

of the *philosophers* and the first part of Stobaios' *Anthologion*. Heike Bottler recently reiterated the claims of Jaap Mansfeld and David Runia about a common source for both collections: this is the *Placita* by Aetius, dating back to the first century AD.<sup>19</sup> A similar approach has also characterised the research of Michael Hillgrüber on the treatise *On Homer*,<sup>20</sup> another pseudo-Plutarchan work whose material is abundantly excerpted in Book 1 of the *Anthologion*. However, each author treats his source-material differently, as specific case-studies illustrate: thus, starting from the comparison of a specific theme (*parrhēsia*, freedom of speech and political plain speaking), Julie Giovacchini has noted that Plutarch has an ambition that is explicitly theoretical and systematic, while Stobaios is confined to the chain of textual passages that he deems worthy to be present in an anthology.<sup>21</sup>

The comparative study of Plutarch's and Stobaios' traditions can be enriched if we take their encyclopaedic structure as our starting-point. The fact that there are at least two available indices of Plutarch's *Moralia* (one of the surviving works since the edition of Maximos Planoudes;<sup>22</sup> the other one in the Lamprias Catalogue) invites fruitful comparisons with the *Anthologion*, as in both cases the indices originate in a secondary manuscript tradition, independent from the direct one of the authors. In Plutarch's case it is an index of his works, while in the case of Stobaios it is an index of contents to his entire work, but with encyclopedic dimensions and partitions. The comparison seems plausible in terms of structure as well, as very often the size of a Stobaeian chapter is comparable to the size of a moral work by Plutarch. One might even go so far as saying that the titles of the Lamprias Catalogue, comparable to the intertitles of the *Anthologion*, may refer to an encyclopedic super-structure of Plutarch's works, analogous to what the *Anthologion*'s excerpts represent. As Searby puts it: "Plutarch's *Moralia* offer several exact parallels to the intertitles in Stobaios.... It is by no means certain that Plutarch was responsible for the

<sup>19</sup> The *Doctrines of the philosophers* that the ancient tradition attributes to Plutarch could be nothing more than an epitome of the second century AD of the homonymous work by Aetius, while in the Stobaeian *Eclogae* (i.e. the first and second books of the *Anthologion*) the ancient *Placita* were likely merged either directly (after four centuries!) or through an intermediate reworking. See Mansfeld-Runia (1997: 328); Bottler (2014: 527). On the theory of Mansfeld-Runia in relation to the archetypal hypothesis of Hermann Diels of *Doxographi Graeci*, see Gourinat (2011: 156–187). At any rate, it would be futile to seek any kind of real connection between the authentic Plutarch and Stobaios regarding the *Doctrines of the philosophers* included within the *Moralia*.

<sup>20</sup> Hillgrüber (1994–1999).

<sup>21</sup> Giovacchini (2011: 625–631); cf. Gritti (2011).

<sup>22</sup> Irigoin (1987: CCCXIX–CCCXXII).

titles of his works as we know them, but he was clearly the author of some of them, because he cites them himself".<sup>23</sup>

In the table below, the *Anthologion* titles are cited side by side with those of Plutarch's works in the Lamprias Catalogue. In most cases the comparison stops at the title only, because the texts themselves are lost; but sometimes readers may also find excerpts of Plutarchan material merged in the Stobaeian *Anthologion*.<sup>24</sup>

Stob.	Chapter title in Stobaios	Chapter title in the Lamprias catalogue	Lamprias catalogue
I 5	<i>On fate and the good arrangement of events</i>	<i>On fate, 2 vols.</i>	58
I 8	<i>On the essence of time and its parts and on the things it causes</i>	<i>On dates</i>	200
I 26	<i>On the essence of the moon and its size, shape, &lt; and phases and on its eclipse, its apparent face and intervals and signs &gt;</i>	<i>On the face that appears in the moon</i>	73
I 49	<i>On the soul</i>	<i>An introduction to psychology</i>	48
I 50	<i>On sensation and sensibles, and whether the senses are reliable</i>	<i>On the senses, 3 vols.</i>	49
I 59	<i>On opinion</i>	<i>On contemporary opinions</i>	165
II 3	<i>On rhetoric</i> [lost chapter]	<i>On rhetoric</i>	47
II 5	<i>On poetry</i> [lost]	<i>On poetry</i>	60
III 1	<i>On virtue</i>	<i>On virtue, whether it can be taught</i>	180

<sup>23</sup> Searby (2011: 30). It should be specified that Searby too judges the Lamprias Catalogue as a document of very ancient origin ("as early as the third or fourth century", *ibidem*); on the history of this text and the letter accompanying it, cf. Irigoin (1987: CCCV–CCCX).

<sup>24</sup> The translation of the chapter titles of the *Anthologion* is from Searby (2011: 57–70); that of the Lamprias Catalogue is from Sandbach (1969: 9–29), with some adaptations and variations. The main objective of this first comparison is to highlight the richness of the gnomic heritage shared with the writers of the first centuries AD; on the grounds of common culture we could explain many similarities in chronologically far removed textual traditions: among the 60 chapters of Book 1 of the *Anthologion*, 49 have a title identical (or nearly identical) to that of the pseudo-Plutarchan *Placita philosophorum*. The parallels in the field of physical science have been summarised in Lachenaud (1993: 47–50), Mansfeld-Runia (1997: 214–216) and especially Gourinat (2011: 191–201).

(cont.)

Stob.	Chapter title in Stobaios	Chapter title in the Lamprias catalogue	Lamprias catalogue
III 9	<i>On the virtue of justice</i>	<i>On justice, a reply to Chrysippus</i> , 3 vols.	59
III 20	<i>On anger</i>	<i>On anger</i> (cf. f. 148 S.)	93
III 21	<i>On the proverb "Know thyself"</i>	<i>On the proverb "Know thyself"</i> and if the soul is immortal	177
III 36	<i>On garrulity</i>	<i>On garrulity</i>	92
IV 29a	<i>On nobility, that those are noble who live virtuously, even if they are not born of illustrious fathers [but have good character]</i>	<i>On nobility</i> (cf. ff. 139–141 S.)	203
IV 35	<i>On pain, that is quite hateful and agonising to those who think anxiously on it</i>	<i>On freedom from pain</i>	172
IV 37	<i>On health and forethought for its continuance</i>	<i>Advice on health</i>	94

We may conclude from the above that the similarity in titles between Plutarch and Stobaios not only points to common sources, but also suggests similarity in their collected materials and especially in the educational setting that lies behind their research: ranging from natural science to ethics, and from virtues to vices, each chapter in Stobaios' *Anthologion*, paired with each corresponding work by Plutarch, seems to relate to a specific field of knowledge, whose structure had probably been consolidated at a time preceding both authors.

### 3 The Consistency of Plutarchan Texts in Stobaios

A study edited by Rosa Maria Piccione<sup>25</sup> provides a detailed survey of all the Plutarchan quotations in the *Anthologion*. For contemporary readers it might be surprising that among the thousands of pages of Stobaios there are only

<sup>25</sup> Piccione (1998: 164–165, 185–201). Prior to the publication of this study, it was necessary to resort to the indices of Wachsmuth-Hense (1884–1912: II 283, V 1196–1198), which are not always complete.

two quotations from the *Parallel lives*. The title of this collection only appears in Stob. 1.8, 44 when, in quoting a few lines from *Num.* 18, the anthologist introduces the (nearly) complete lemma “From the book by Plutarch on parallels between Numa and Lycurgus”. The quotation is limited to a single general opinion: “the first to introduce the calendar months of January and February was King Numa, whereas before that period the Romans subdivided the year into ten months only”. This quote is entirely consistent with the argument of the chapter, devoted to the definition of time and its distribution. As this lemma is the only explicit reference to the *Parallel lives*, we cannot be certain about the anthologist’s wider knowledge of the corpus, though the quote might suggest careful research into the *Parallel lives’* content in order to locate specific information.

In other passages, by contrast, the compiler does not provide the source of a moral teaching, a judgment or an apophthegm. The second Stobaean quote from the *Lives* is, for example, less certain: it concerns *Ages.* 23.8, and appears in Stob. 3.9, 25, in the chapter on justice (*Peri dikaiosynēs*). In this case, the compiler administers the reader with an entry that does not include the name of Plutarch, but that of Agesilaus, as if the same politician were the author of the text: “Courage offers no benefit when there is no justice; after all, if everyone were just men, there would be no need of courage”. The sentence appears, always attributed to Agesilaus and in almost identical form, in the *Sayings of kings and commanders* 190F and the *Sayings of Spartans* 213B. Despite the opinion of Curt Wachsmuth that Stobaios in this case too relies on the *Lives*,<sup>26</sup> it would be more plausible to assume a common source for all the texts in question. Certainly there were many gnomological materials circulating on Agesilaus in antiquity,<sup>27</sup> which likely inspired Plutarch in drafting his *Life*, but also flowed into gnomological collections such as the *Corpus Parisinum* (598 Elter) and Stobaios’ *Anthologion*. It seems, in fact, that in the chapter on justice Stobaios records this sentence of Agesilaus not because it comes from Plutarch, but because of the fact that the short text contains the key word according to which the whole chapter is structured: *dikaiosynē*. Indeed, lexicography must have been one of the main criteria according to which the *Anthologion* chapters were originally drafted, which means that quotes were selected depending on their lexical coherence with the intitile. Since Stobaios neither provides any comment on selected texts, nor connects them with arguments or comparisons outside the entries, there is a clear difference between his approach and Plutarch’s biographical method. Given this, it is not surprising to observe

<sup>26</sup> Wachsmuth (1882: 151).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Hamilton (1992). More generally, see also Desideri (1992).

that the most cited Plutarchan work in the *Anthologion* is the *Sayings of kings and commanders*, with 26 quotes scattered throughout books III and IV of the *Anthologion*.<sup>28</sup>

At n. 59 the Lamprias Catalogue lists a lost treatise *On justice, a reply to Chrysippus*, 3 vols.; the current edition of the Stobaeon chapter on justice includes 64 citations (23 in poetry,<sup>29</sup> at the beginning, and 41 in prose, in the second part), and a great number of references to texts which discuss *dikaiosynē*. But there is no trace of a text attributed to Plutarch such as the one mentioned in the Lamprias Catalogue, and even less is there a trace of an anti-Chrysippian debate about justice. All these indications (unfortunately limited to *argumenta ex silentio*) further strengthen the hypothesis that Stobaios did not have direct access to Plutarch's *Parallel lives* and *Moralia*. Given that Stobaios prepared his compendium mainly for educational purposes, the absence of quotations from the *Lives* can be explained in two ways: 1) political biography was not a subject of interest in education; 2) Plutarch was not included in the canon of authors to be read at school (unlike Euripides, Menander, Xenophon, and Plato, who are, in fact, the most quoted authors within the *Anthologion*). As the unique quotation from the *Lives* in Stob. 1.8, 44 is accompanied by a very accurate lemma, it is reasonable to assume that the text comes from another collection (perhaps more interested in *Parallel lives*), with a different lemmatic structure.

By contrast, the second most mentioned authentic work of Plutarch is the *Advice on marriage*, which appears in 15 passages; but even more significant is that 13 of them are consecutive quotes, especially in chapter 4.23, which bears the same title as Plutarch's treatise: *Advice on marriage* (Stob. 4.23, 43–52), and follows the same order of topics as the original Plutarchan text. It is quite significant that the excerptor(s) (Stobaios or someone else) thought it proper to draw a block of consecutive passages on marriage from Plutarch, beginning from the most relevant essay to the subject of the chapter (so relevant as to inspire the same title),<sup>30</sup> as this once more suggests that common cultural concerns probably played a key role in Stobaios' choices as an excerptor. As Searby puts it: "We can speak of a multi-functional work that would suit the needs of an educated civil servant in, say, Plutarch's position. Although Plutarch lived

<sup>28</sup> Piccione (1998: 165).

<sup>29</sup> In Stob. 3.9, 23, i.e. two *eclogae* before the Agesilaus apophthegm, the reader finds the elegy *To the Muses of Solon*: only the *Florilegium* manuscripts are testimonies to this famous poem (fr. 13 W.).

<sup>30</sup> On the use of *Con. praec.* cf. Garzya (1988: 10–11) and Piccione (1998: 182).

long before Stobaios, the contents of his *Moralia* reminds us in various ways of the contents of the *Anthologion*.<sup>31</sup>

#### 4 The Exclusive Plutarch, Known Only through Stobaios

Numerous Plutarchan fragments are transmitted to us exclusively through the *Anthologion*. For example, *Is foreknowledge of future events useful?* is an essay from which the surviving *Anthologion* draws three fragments, distributed in Books 1, 2 and 3; the content of the introductory entries (which always specify the author's name and the full title of the treatise) suggests that the anthologist probably drew the extracts from the same source, and on the basis of a lexicographical criterion, as previously mentioned. It is also significant that in these excerpts the topic is not what the reader might expect from the title: what draws the anthologist's attention is not the prediction of future events itself, but the educational usefulness implied in the individual arguments contained within each extract. For example, in fr. 21 S. (Stob. 1.5, 19, the chapter on *eimarmenē*, fate) the reader finds two epithets of *eimarmenē*, with an analysis that is more related to a poetical (fr. adesp. 19 Diehl – 99 Page) rather than a philosophical description; in fr. 22 S. (Stob. 2.8, 25, the chapter on how much the individual's will can dominate) the finality of destiny is still emphasised; in fr. 23 S. (Stob. 3.3, 41, the chapter on *phronēsis*, prudence) the reader finds a definition of *phronēsis* as the ability to investigate the future not in terms of prediction or forecast (i.e. *prognōsis*, the word of Plutarch's title), but on the basis of the past and thanks to memory. What this choice and sequence of excerpts makes clear is that the thematic topic of each chapter is used by Stobaios as a tool for ethical teaching.

In contrast to the above, extracts from *Against pleasure*, another writing by Plutarch that only Stobaios mentions,<sup>32</sup> are concentrated in five consecutive short extracts in Book 3 (fr. 116–120 S. = Stob. 3.6, 49–53, the chapter on licentiousness). In addition, the excerptor in this case does not follow a lexicographical criterion (none of the five extracts contains the term *akolasia*, which is the title of the chapter) but an implicit argument: intemperance (*akolasia*) is the result of the pursuit of pleasure, therefore Plutarch's treatise *Against pleasure* is key to providing quotations which demonstrate that pleasure is an expression of licentiousness. In this chapter, the anthologist (Stobaios or

<sup>31</sup> Searby (2011: 55).

<sup>32</sup> See, however, editorial doubts on the Plutarchan authenticity of the fragments in Sandbach (1967: 73–75).

another) builds doxographical rubrics by author: in the prose section, readers find excerpts referring to Socrates (3.6, 14–16), Musonius (21–24), Democritus (26–28), Eusebios (30–34, despite the uncertainty of the entries), Diogenes (35–41), Plutarch (the block examined), Pythagoras (54–56), Epictetus (57–58) and other authors, up to the conclusion containing longer quotations from Platonic dialogues (67–68). The fact that the five passages from *Against pleasure* are arranged consecutively within the chapter does not necessarily mean that the *Anthologion* order reflects the one from the original text.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the extracts do not seem to have any obvious connection to one another in terms of syntax and argumentative consistency, as they offer different negative definitions of pleasure; this may mean that the selection originates from pages that are far apart in the model, but also that the anthologist's aim was to draw autonomous, cohesive and consistent texts, even at the cost of conspicuous alterations in the source-text. Nothing is more in need of consistency, accuracy and syntactic fluency than a definition, especially when pertaining to schools or any other educational context. Nevertheless, it is highly likely that an earlier anthologist read Plutarch's work with the intention of excerpting the most persuasive passages towards warning the reader against the pursuit of pleasure and presenting all its harmful aspects to the men who practice it; then Stobaios or some other excerptor found that selection on pleasure and inserted it in the chapter on intemperance (and not in the one dedicated to physical pleasures, 4.20, where there is also a marked presence of Plutarchan authentic and apocryphal texts: see below). Yet elsewhere in the same book, the *Anthologion* compilers are not as meticulous in attributing material to Plutarch, as evidenced by the mention of two apophthegms by Cato the Elder (Stob. 3 6, 61–62): the entry in question does not mention the name of Plutarch, but only that of the character.<sup>34</sup>

If the different labelling of the entries can be an indication of different excerptors' work during the successive drafting stages that formed the *Anthologion* in the Byzantine period, perhaps the essay *On love* testifies to the growing success of Plutarch's treatises, as evinced from the availability of source-material to anthologists. Multiple sources and different references to the same work (or the same corpus), in fact suggest an increase in the number of readers, and

33 On the relationship between the entry type and the consequentiality of excerpts, and the impossibility of determining a criterion for rebuilding the original source based on the order of the *Anthologion*, see Piccione (1999: 146–154).

34 Also because they are apophthegms recurrent in gnomological literature; see Fuhrmann (1988: 101, nn. 1–2, 296).

therefore the increasing fortune of that author. The five fragments from *On love* are all contained in Book 4 but are introduced with different entries ("Plutarch, from the work *On love*" in Stob. 4.20, 34; 4.20, 69; 4.21, 25, respectively fr. 134, 137, 138 S., or "From Plutarch's argument that love is not a matter of decision" in Stob. 4.20, 67–68 = fr. 135–136 S.). The duplication of *lēmmata* related to the same work does not necessarily imply an apocryphal text;<sup>35</sup> rather, it suggests that contents were available in several anthologies and compendia from which Stobaios derived his own material. A few examples from chapter 20 of Book 4, dedicated to love for physical pleasure, may illustrate this: thus, in the conclusion of the first part of this chapter, dedicated to Pandemos Aphrodite and love as physical passion, the first mention of the work *On Love* (fr. 134 S.) precedes two long extracts from Plato's *Symposium*; then, the Plutarchan extract found in Stob. 4.20, 34 is a lengthy critical commentary on a quite long quotation from Menander (fr. 568 K.-A.), on falling in love;<sup>36</sup> later, in the second part of the chapter, devoted to the blame of Aphrodite and vulgar love, the prose section is substantiated by three Plutarchan excerpts: two of them (135–136) are probably consecutive, because they treat love as a disease, while the third (137, characterised by the return of the previous *lēmma* "Plutarch, from the work *On love*"), discusses erotic symptoms in comparison with the basic elements (fire) or with other types of passion (anger). The duplication of *lēmmata* is a sign of the flexible use of Plutarchan material in order to suit different argumentative contexts, but it is also possible that the two Plutarchan excerpts with an analytic *lēmma* ("From Plutarch's argument that love is not a matter of decision") were added by an anthologist from a collection in which they were grouped under a variant of the most popular title.<sup>37</sup>

The versatility of the Stobaean *Anthologion* makes it the oldest and richest source of Plutarch's testimonies, documenting at the same time the author's increasingly expanding appeal in the subsequent cultural tradition. As we already saw, the stratification of the manuscript tradition and the complex structure of the *Anthologion* suggest that the Plutarchan corpus reached Stobaios either through direct readings (from the *Moralia*) or via common sources. Moreover,

<sup>35</sup> According to the opinion of Sandbach (1967: 83, about fr. 135).

<sup>36</sup> Already Piccione (1998: 178) noted that the excerpts from *On love* in this chapter are the longest and most demanding of all the Plutarchan production merged into the *Florilegium*.

<sup>37</sup> The alternative hypothesis is that fr. 135–136 come from a Plutarch's work similar to *On love*; the literary tradition does not offer other testimonies, however. Moreover, the hypothesis is not useful, since there is no relationship between these texts and the *Amatorius* or the *Am. Narr.* (never mentioned in the *Anthologion*).

the *Anthologion* contains Plutarchan material that was added later, probably due to Plutarch's growing popularity as stylistic model in the Byzantine age. On the other hand, the *Parallel lives* reached Stobaios devoid of their narrative texture and historical context, in the form of apophthegms, selected statements, or proverbial sayings by famous personalities.

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# The Reception of Plutarch in Constantinople in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries

*András Németh*

## 1 Introduction

The evolution of literary taste over the ninth and tenth centuries in Constantinople ultimately proved decisive for the transmission of Plutarch's *Lives*. Mostly under the guidance and supervision of Constantine VII (b. 905, sole reign: 945–959), Byzantine historiography departed from the genre of chronicles and integrated many elements from secular biography, the rhetorical encomium and hagiography. This shift of taste drew on a long process that had already begun in the ninth century. Over this period, Plutarch's extensive *Moralia* did not receive as marked attention as his *Lives* did. Authors of the ninth and tenth centuries occasionally cited various parts of the *Moralia* directly or indirectly. Manuscripts of the *Moralia* survive from this period too,<sup>1</sup> but were very likely produced together with the imperial edition of the *Lives* (tenth century).<sup>2</sup> This chapter will follow the route by which Plutarch's *Lives* gradually gained recognition and then began to serve as models for Byzantine authors to imitate.

## 2 Byzantine Chroniclers

From the second half of the ninth century, Byzantium experienced a revival of classical culture, which languished in oblivion during the long interval of Iconoclasm (726–787, 814–842). The depiction of human figures had been officially repressed for more than a century since 726, except for a brief interruption from 787–814. In the period after 843, a date which marked the reintroduction

<sup>1</sup> On the evidence of the earliest manuscripts of the *Moralia*, see Irigoin (1971) and Manfredini (2000), as well as the chapter by Pérez Martín in this volume.

<sup>2</sup> This would follow from the layout of the earliest manuscripts in 32 lines, as argued by Manfredini (2000). See also the reference to Constantine VII in Ambrosianus H 22 sup. Wachsmuth (1863).

of the veneration of icons and the so-called “Triumph of Orthodoxy”, the inhabitants of Constantinople were exposed to biography only in the form of hagiographical readings on various liturgical occasions that commemorated the feasts of saints. Historiography was mostly practiced in the form of chronicles, which established the series of events of select periods in linear succession.<sup>3</sup> Chronicle writers were careful to harmonise the chronology of select periods from diverse sources.<sup>4</sup> Their attention to chronological accuracy, however, did not allow them to draw upon the stylistic repertory of secular biography which had abundantly enriched the classicising historical writing of late antiquity. The literary techniques of the secular biography, which chronicle writers normally rejected, captured the attention of Emperors and the intellectuals close to them so as to become models for imitation in courtly circles.<sup>5</sup>

In their chronological accounts of Greek and Roman history, the foremost chroniclers of the ninth century used Plutarch's *Lives* only indirectly. George the Synkellos (d. after 810), for example, who compiled his *World chronicle* from the creation of the world up to Diocletian's reign (284), met with Plutarch's name and citations from his works only as recycled in other chronicles. Some citations derive from Eusebios' *Chronicle*,<sup>6</sup> while the direct sources of other citations are impossible to establish. The fact that he is styled “philosopher Plutarch of Chaeronea” shows that at the beginning of our period Plutarch was known primarily for his *Moralia*.<sup>7</sup> In chronicle writing, events related to his life became points of reference. Under the heading for the beginning of Hadrian's reign, George the Synkellos says that he appointed Plutarch procurator of Greece.<sup>8</sup> Plutarch's nephew Sextus is also mentioned in a later passage.<sup>9</sup> In the mid-ninth century, George the Monk (not to be confused with his namesake the Synkellos) compiled a concise world chronicle from the creation of the world until 842, and he refers to the *Parallel lives*.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Mango (1988–1989) and Ševčenko (1992).

<sup>4</sup> Jeffreys (1979) and Scott (1981).

<sup>5</sup> Ljubarskij (1992) and Markopoulos (2009).

<sup>6</sup> E.g., George the Synkellos, ed. Mosshammer (1984: 175, 360) and Adler-Tuffin (2002: 215, n. 5; and 432, n. 3).

<sup>7</sup> George the Synkellos, ed. Mosshammer (1984: 360) and Adler-Tuffin (2002: 432, n. 3).

<sup>8</sup> George the Synkellos, ed. Mosshammer (1984: 426) and Adler-Tuffin (2002: 503).

<sup>9</sup> George the Synkellos, ed. Mosshammer (1984: 432) and Adler-Tuffin (2002: 509).

<sup>10</sup> Ref. to *Sol. 2.* in Georg. Mon., ed. de Boor (1904: I, 76,8).

## 3 Photios

In the ninth century, Patriarch Photios (c. 810–c. 893) was the first who read Plutarch's *Lives* with fresh attention to biographical details. Photios knew Plutarch's *Lives*, as his letters demonstrate. For example, in his letter to Michael, king of Bulgaria, after the latter's baptism around 865, Photios referred to the enchanting power of Persian women's gaze with words borrowed from *Alexander* 21.11.<sup>11</sup> However, Photios' appreciation of Plutarch again probably did not rely directly on his *Lives*,<sup>12</sup> as also seems to be the case with his *Bibliotheca*.

In his *Bibliotheca*, Photios claimed to be providing information that would supplement what was otherwise easily accessible. Thus Plutarch, as one of Photios' subjects, would not have been ranked among the most well-known authors, and information about his works again comes second hand. The *Bibliotheca* consists of reviews, summaries and extracts of 280 units conventionally known as "codices". The 280 works reviewed by Photios can be divided into two parts.<sup>13</sup> In the second part (cod. 234–280), Photios supplied textual extracts with biographical information about the authors, instead of providing the reader only with summaries, as he did in the first part (cod. 1–233). Thus, the second part of his work (cod. 234–280) includes direct citations of the passages that interested Photios because of their phrasing or curious content. Two of Photios' codices shed light on his encounter with Plutarch. In the first part of his *Bibliotheca*, Photios summarised the work of Sopater of Apamea (fourth century) who compiled twelve books of extracts collected from select authors (cod. 161).<sup>14</sup> Books 8–11 of Sopater included excerpts from Plutarch's *Moralia* as well as from twenty-four pairs of Plutarch's *Lives* in a sequence different from any attested in manuscripts of the *Lives*.<sup>15</sup> In the second part (cod. 245), Photios cited select excerpts from a book that included an abridged edition covering half of Plutarch's *Lives*.<sup>16</sup> The nature of this "abridged edition" (*ekdosis kata synopsin*), which Photios actually read, remains puzzling. He remarkably cites his excerpts from Plutarch in the chronological order of the Greek heroes

<sup>11</sup> Photios, *E* 1, 1051–2, ed. Laourdas and Westerink (1984: 1, 34).

<sup>12</sup> See the collection of excerpts from various authors, including Plutarch, which has been attributed to Photios. Sternbach (1893, nos. 3–89: 69–74).

<sup>13</sup> Treadgold (1983: 9) and Wilson (1994: 6–7).

<sup>14</sup> On Sopater of Apamea, see *Suda* σ 848.

<sup>15</sup> Photios, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 161, ed. Henry (1960: II, 123–128). Ziegler (1907: 36–42); Severyns (1937); Henry (1938); Schamp (1995); Irigoin (1982–1983: esp. 12). See the list of biographical pairs in the Lamprias catalogue, in Ziegler (1907: 33–36).

<sup>16</sup> Photios, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 245, ed. Henry (1971: VI, 174–194).

of the biographic pairs, without, however, applying any comparable sequencing method to the Roman subjects.<sup>17</sup> This arrangement corresponds to the second volume of the complete edition of *Lives* in two codices.

This principle of grouping the pairs of *Lives* by the Greek element of each pair is followed only in one of the oldest manuscripts of Plutarch's *Parallel lives*, a manuscript dating to the mid-tenth century, now in Seitenstetten, and in its descendant copies.<sup>18</sup> This manuscript had been mutilated at its beginning, middle, and end. In the fifteenth century, the obvious lacunae were filled with text copied from manuscripts that belonged to the three-volume tradition (see below).<sup>19</sup> The actual physical damage permits the assumption that the pairs of *Theseus – Romulus* were lost at the beginning, *Alcibiades – Coriolanus* and *Lysander – Sulla* in the middle, and *Pelopidas – Marcellus* at the end. If completed with the lost pairs just listed, the Seitenstetten Plutarch would constitute the first volume of the edition whose second volume was used by the epitomator of Photios' direct source. It remains puzzling why Photios avoided citing texts of the first volume, although he knew about *Lives* missing from it from Sopater. It is probably the case that the volume Photios read did not include anything of the first volume. Thus, the pair *Epaminondas – Scipio*, which does not survive today, might have been lost either from the end of the first or the beginning of the second volume already at an early phase of the textual tradition, as it happened with the pair *Agis – Tiberius and Caius Gracchus*.

It remains uncertain when exactly the *Lives* were grouped in a more organised fashion and redistributed in three volumes representing the redaction that later became standard. The relationship of this redaction with the one distributing the *Lives* across two volumes does not permit us to establish a hierarchical link between the two.<sup>20</sup> However, this distribution of the *Lives* in three volumes took place very probably before Photios but certainly not later than in the course of the late ninth or the first half of the tenth century,<sup>21</sup> and it applied a more sophisticated classification principle – again surprisingly – only to the Greek elements. Here *Lives* were arranged not only by chronology

<sup>17</sup> This was first observed by Schöne (1903).

<sup>18</sup> Seitenstetten, Stiftsbibliothek, cod. 34 (mid-tenth century) with 37 lines. On this manuscript and its descendant copies, see Stefec (2013: 179–180).

<sup>19</sup> Joannes Thettalos Skutarioites (active in the second half of the fifteenth century) completed the mutilated section of the manuscript on ff. (*Lyc.*) 1–10, (*Fab. Max., Nic.-Crass.*) 189–198, 202–207, (*Pomp.*) 259–272, 275–277, 282–283. In its final section, some recycled folios were inserted from a fourteenth-century manuscript (ff. 273–274, 278–281).

<sup>20</sup> Manfredini (1977) and Stefec (2013: 184–185).

<sup>21</sup> Irigoin (1982–1983: 4–11).

TABLE 1 The two-volume edition of Plutarch's *Parallel lives*

Volume 1 (Seitenstetten, cod. 34)	Volume 2 (Photios, <i>Bibl.</i> cod. 245)
(1) [Theseus – Romulus]	(13) Dion – Brutus
(2) Lycurgus – Numa	(14) [Timoleon] – Aemilius Paulus
(3) Solon – Publicola	(15) Demosthenes – Cicero
(4) Aristides – Cato Maior	(16) Phocion – Cato Minor
(5) Themistocles – Camillus	(17) Alexander – Caesar
(6) Cimon – Lucullus	(18) Eumenes – Sertorius
(7) Pericles – Fabius Maximus	(19) Demetrius – Antonius
(8) Nicias – Crassus	(20) Pyrrhus – Marius
(9) [Alcibiades – Coriolanus]	(21) Aratus – Artaxerxes
(10) [Lysander – Sulla]	(22) [Agis et] Cleomenes – [T. et C. Gracchus] [lost]
(11) Agesilaus – Pompeius	
(12) [Pelopidas – Marcellus]	(23) [Philopoemen] – Flamininus
[Epaminondas – Scipio] [lost]	

The square brackets show the *Life* which is absent either from the Seitenstetten manuscript or from Photios' excerpts, but which must have been part of the complete set.

TABLE 2 The three-volume edition of Plutarch's *Parallel lives*

Vol. I	Vol. II	Vol. III
1. <i>Thes.</i> – <i>Rom.</i>	1. <i>Phoc.</i> – <i>Ca. Mi.</i>	1. <i>Demetr.</i> – <i>Ant.</i>
2. <i>Sol.</i> – <i>Publ.</i>	2. <i>Dion</i> – <i>Brut.</i>	2. <i>Pyrrh.</i> – <i>Mar.</i>
3. <i>Them.</i> – <i>Cam.</i>	3. <i>Aem.</i> – <i>Tim.</i>	3. <i>Arat.</i> – <i>Art.</i>
4. <i>Arist.</i> – <i>Ca. Ma.</i>	4. <i>Sert.</i> – <i>Eum.</i>	4. [Agis et] <i>Cleom.</i> – [TG and CG]
5. <i>Cim.</i> – <i>Luc.</i>	5. <i>Phil.</i> – <i>Flam.</i>	5. <i>Lyc.</i> – <i>Num.</i>
6. <i>Per.</i> – <i>Fab.</i>	6. <i>Pel.</i> – <i>Marc.</i>	6. <i>Lys.</i> – <i>Sull.</i>
7. <i>Nic.</i> – <i>Crass.</i>	7. <i>Alex.</i> – <i>Caes.</i>	7. <i>Ages.</i> – <i>Pomp.</i>
8. <i>Alc.</i> – <i>Cor.</i>	[Epaminondas – Scipio?]	
9. <i>Dem.</i> – <i>Cic.</i>		

but also by location, as it is confirmed by numerals added to each pair.<sup>22</sup> Greek heroes from Athens form a separate group at the beginning of the series (I.1–9 and II.1) as do Spartan kings at the end (III.4–7). The remaining statesmen and generals from a range of locations (e.g. Syracusae, Thebes, Caria and Macedonia) were grouped in between, more or less resembling the chronological order of the division in two books (esp. nos. 13–14 and 19–22 in Table 1). The pair *Epaminondas – Scipio* had probably been lost by the ninth century.

#### 4 Learned Readers: Arethas, Niketas Magistros, Leo VI and Constantine VII

In addition to the Seitenstetten manuscript, the basic manuscripts of the three-volume tradition of the *Lives* survive from the tenth and eleventh centuries and very likely testify to an imperial initiative to standardise the whole surviving portion of Plutarch's *Lives*.<sup>23</sup> The earliest manuscripts of the three-volume tradition from the late tenth and early eleventh centuries share their formal features with several other manuscripts produced at imperial commission during the third quarter of the tenth century. These imperial manuscripts include texts copied in 32 lines per page and all share similar ruling types and with large dimensions.<sup>24</sup> A few of them are directly connected to the Emperor's close circle due to the fact that they include works ascribed to Constantine VII, such as his book of ceremonies,<sup>25</sup> the *Excerpta historica* (see below),<sup>26</sup> and two military collections.<sup>27</sup> Another group of manuscripts from the late tenth and early eleventh centuries include Plutarch's *Moralia* and *Lives*

<sup>22</sup> Irigoin (1982–1983: 4–5). This redaction knows the division into three volumes and the definite order of the pairs by the consistent use of numeric references.

<sup>23</sup> (i) Vaticanus gr. 138 (tenth–early eleventh century) includes I.1–9 with 32 lines to the page with (I.8) *Mar.-Alc.* (ii) Laurentianus conv. soppr. 206 (tenth century) includes II.1–7 with 31 lines. Agati (1992: 1, 99–100). Athos, Lavra Γ 84 (early eleventh century) includes II.3–7 with 32 lines. Heidelbergensis Pal. gr. 168–9 include II.1–7 with 22 lines. (iii) Laurentianus Plut. 69.6 includes III.1–7 and was copied in 997 with 31 or 33 lines. Porciani (2011: 84–85). Coislinianus 319 (tenth–eleventh century) includes III.1–7, each *Life* is numbered by no. 1–13 (α'–γ'). Vaticanus gr. 437 (tenth century), f. 213 (one folio preserving fragment of III.7b) with 32 lines.

<sup>24</sup> Irigoin (1959: 177–181), (1971, 1982–1983).

<sup>25</sup> Lipsiensis Rep. I 17. The palimpsest fragments of the other copy of *De ceremoniis* have 28 ruled lines.

<sup>26</sup> Turonensis 980 with EVV and the erased text of Vaticanus gr. 73 with ES.

<sup>27</sup> Laurentianus Plut. 55.4 and Ambrosianus B 119 sup.

copied in 22 lines to the page.<sup>28</sup> It is difficult to establish the circumstances of this 22-line edition, which is not independent from the imperial one.

The manuscripts of both the two-volume and three-volume traditions include scholia (marginal comments). A few of them make references to events that took place around 917–920,<sup>29</sup> in the fashion of Arethas (c. 860–c. 940), the famous book collector and archbishop of Cappadocian Caesarea,<sup>30</sup> whose scholia allude to contemporary events and concerns. Employing professional scribes, Arethas accumulated a rich private library from which a few copies survive.<sup>31</sup> He was keen to annotate his own manuscripts. A great number of his manuscripts have been lost over the centuries, but very probably many of them were still accessible for reproduction in the mid-tenth century in Constantinople. Thus, he very probably owned Plutarch's *Lives* and carefully read and annotated these volumes.<sup>32</sup> Certainly not all these scholia are to be attributed to Arethas, though it is very likely that Arethas penned many of them. The phases of accumulation of these scholia remain equally puzzling. Manuscripts of the *Lives* might have been contaminated with earlier and later scholia even across the two- and the three-volume redactions.<sup>33</sup>

A bitter scholiast,<sup>34</sup> probably Arethas himself, commented on the tragic end of L. Aemilius Paulus at the battle of Cannae (*Fab. Max.* 16.6) with the words “this happened also to Nikolaos, whom we call by the name Pikingles, when he fought with the Bulgarians”. Nikolaos, who cannot otherwise be identified, must have participated in a battle in 917 against Simeon I of Bulgaria (r. 893–927), which finally led to the defeat of the Byzantine army. At another point in Plutarch (*Cam.* 23.3), Camillus encourages the inhabitants of Ardea that “they should not conceive of the Romans' misfortune as the virtue of the Gauls”.<sup>35</sup> The scholiast in the Seitenstetten manuscript wrote “likewise <they should not see> the Romans' feminine behaviour as the virtue of the Bulgarians”, alluding again to the Byzantine-Bulgar wars before 924. A scholion refers to the Saracen pirates before 922 (*Nic.* 12.3) and another comments upon schism (*Nic.* 11.3), probably hinting at the fourth marriage of Leo VI, which was a major controversy before 920, when Romanos Lekapenos usurped the throne from Leo's heir, Constantine VII.

<sup>28</sup> Irigoin (1971) and Manfredini (2000).

<sup>29</sup> These scholia feature in *Cam.*, *Ca. Ma.*, *Fab. Max.*, *Luc.*, *Dion.*, *Alex.*, and *Caes.*

<sup>30</sup> Wilson (1996: 128) too accepts Arethas' authorship of these scholia.

<sup>31</sup> Lemerle (1971: 213–235); Wilson (1996: 120–129); Pontani (2015: 342–346).

<sup>32</sup> Manfredini (1975, 1979).

<sup>33</sup> Stefec (2013: 180, n. 30–31).

<sup>34</sup> The examples derive from Manfredini (1975: 338–342).

<sup>35</sup> My own translation.

Already in the lifetime of Arethas, a great number of philosophical, poetical, and historical works were reproduced in the minuscule script, mostly in the various scriptoria of the Byzantine capital.<sup>36</sup> Many monks, priests, civil servants and schoolmasters also worked as scribes or collated copies with their models for correction. An anonymous schoolmaster from the early tenth century known only from a surviving letter collection is an excellent example for such activity. His letters enable us to see his daily routine and management of a lay school, as well as the intelligence of a Constantinopolitan schoolmaster in the period when Plutarch began to attract wider attention.<sup>37</sup> Among the high number of classical authors and historians whose works he cited, the anonymous schoolmaster seems to have found special interest in Plutarch. His letters include several phrases cited from or reminiscent of the *Lives* and even more from the *Moralia*.<sup>38</sup>

In his consolation letter to Romanos I (r. 920–944) for the loss of his wife in 922, Patriarch Nicholas Mystikos (852–925), who employed the anonymous schoolmaster for scribal works,<sup>39</sup> mentioned the heroic strength of Aemilius Paulus in his deep grief after his two sons had died at the same time, as Plutarch recounted.<sup>40</sup>

Niketas Magistros (c. 870–after 946), a contemporary of Arethas and the anonymous schoolmaster, was also an enthusiastic reader of the *Parallel lives*. He maintained his links to court during his long exile (928–946). After marrying his daughter Sophia to Christopher, Romanos' son, Niketas was accused of encouraging Christopher to depose his father and was then forced into exile to the Hellespont. Many of Niketas' letters survive, and they are full of allusions to ancient literature. In 937 or 938, he requested manuscripts of Plutarch, Demosthenes and Hermogenes from Alexander of Nicaea,<sup>41</sup> the chair of rhetoric at the Palace School that Constantine VII renewed after a long interval. Niketas enjoyed citing ancient, non-Christian authors including Plutarch and

<sup>36</sup> Wilson (1996: 136–140). On the cultural activity of the period with the latest bibliography, see Pontani (2015: 327–355).

<sup>37</sup> London, BL Add. 36,749, ff. 135v–232r includes *Anonymus Prof.*, ed. Markopoulos.

<sup>38</sup> Markopoulos (2000: 153–154). See the borrowings from Plutarch's *Lives* in *Anonymus Prof.*, Ep. 73, 18–19 (a letter to Basil, Metropolitan of Neocaesarea with a clear citation from *Arist.* 1.1); as well as Ep. 30, 17–18 (*Cor.* 19), and finally there are likely hints of *Ca. Mi.* (56 sqq) in a letter he wrote to his student, Ioannikios (Ep. 96.29).

<sup>39</sup> *Anonymus Prof.* E 88 (see *Eps.* 31, 47, 53–54, all letters only mention the title “Patriarch”); see Markopoulos (2000: 44–45\* n.28, 63\*–64\*). On the schoolmaster's employment by the patriarch as a scribe, see Cortassa (2001).

<sup>40</sup> Nicholas Mystikos, Ep. 156.26–34, ed. Jenkins and Westerink (1973: 476).

<sup>41</sup> Niketas Magistros, Ep. 9.30, ed. Westerink (1973: 77). Alexander collated Lucian (Vaticanus gr. 90) and had a well-equipped private library. See Markopoulos (1994: 324).

drew parallels between figures of literature and history and actual situations. He expected those to whom he addressed his letters – mostly members of the courtly elite – to appreciate his allusions to classical literature. He wrote letters including reminiscences of the *Lives* to John the *patrikios*,<sup>42</sup> Theophanes the *protovestiarios*,<sup>43</sup> George the *patrikios*,<sup>44</sup> Alexander of Nicaea,<sup>45</sup> and even to Constantine VII<sup>46</sup> and his teacher, Theodore of Kyzikos.<sup>47</sup>

In addition to the popularity of Plutarch in the Emperor's circle and to the formal features shared in the early manuscripts of this redaction in 32 lines, the promotion of the three-volume edition seems to be connected to Constantine VII's court for another reason too. The superimposition of topographical arrangement over chronology and the emphasis on rulers, as it had been made in the three-volume redaction which probably dates prior to Photios, fit well with Constantine VII's court culture. Constantine's circle engaged on a major scale in rearranging extensive historical works according to topics including many biographical aspects, resulting in the *Excerpta Constantiniana*.<sup>48</sup> This was an ambitious imperial project initiated by Constantine VII himself. The complete works of at least twenty-six historians were cut into short sections and redistributed into fifty-three groups by their content. The participants in the project made efforts to include every single passage of the extensive historical works by limiting as much as possible the adjustments they made to the excerpts. Each excerpt was allocated to one of fifty-three collections arranged by topic. These topics included crucial moments of imperial careers, military practice, diplomacy, biographical curiosities and literary genres embedded in historical works. Finally, the excerpts assigned to each topic were then copied in separate manuscripts, grouped by author and in the sequence of the primary texts. Surprisingly, Plutarch's *Lives* were not selected among the works to

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<sup>42</sup> Niketas Magistros, *Ep.* 12.13–15 (a hint at the death of Hephaistion in *Alex.* 72.3) and 12.31–33 (*Alc.* 23.4), ed. Westerink (1973: 85–87).

<sup>43</sup> Niketas Magistros, *Ep.* 15.6–7 (*Tim.* 36.5 on *Fortuna* or *Tychē*) and 15.7–8 (*Sull.* 6.5–6), ed. Westerink (1973: 93).

<sup>44</sup> Niketas Magistros, *Ep.* 25.36–37 (*Arist.* 7.1–2) and 25.38–39 (*Phoc.* 36), ed. Westerink (1973: 121).

<sup>45</sup> Niketas Magistros, *Ep.* 9.25 (*Thes.* 26.3–6), ed. Westerink (1973: 77). He acknowledged the receipt of manuscripts, including Plutarch, from Alexander.

<sup>46</sup> Niketas Magistros, *Ep.* 31.34–35 (*Sull.* 6.5–6, again on *Fortuna* or *Tychē*), ed. Westerink (1973: 133).

<sup>47</sup> Niketas Magistros, *Ep.* 8.24 (*Thes.* 22.6–7), ed. Westerink (1973: 73).

<sup>48</sup> Németh (2018).

be redistributed by topic, perhaps because his work did not need to be restructured to attract courtly readers' attention.<sup>49</sup>

Additional efforts were made both to avoid repetitions of identical texts and to fill up extensive lacunae in the original manuscripts. Needless to say, the imperial team was not able to meet these expectations in every case, and several repetitions and lacunae remain. The attempts to fill lacunae gave Plutarch's text an unusual role. In two of the fifty-three topics, *On virtues and vices* and *On embassies of foreigners to Romans*, Books 30–35 of Cassius Dio are filled out with *Sulla* – from the three-volume redaction (III.6b)<sup>50</sup> – regarding some events from the war against Mithridates VI (r. 134–63 BC), king of Pontus and Armenia Minor.<sup>51</sup> It seems likely that the imperial team did not have a complete set of Dio's eighty books at their disposal for the *Excerpta* project. Since the excerptors knew approximately the content of the inaccessible portion and had observed that Dio frequently cited Plutarch, it was a reasonable choice to use Plutarch as a substitute for missing passages in Dio. Since this intervention is present in two collections of the *Excerpta*, the integration of *Sulla* in Dio's work must have taken place in the preparatory phase of the *Excerpta* project, when the complete texts were assembled in the palace and before the historical works were classified into fifty-three topics. As biographies of important historical figures, Plutarch was excluded but – in cases of long lacunae – his text was an important resource for complementing a historian proper who otherwise borrowed from Plutarch.

Interest in Plutarch at the court of the Macedonian Emperors began earlier. Constantine's father, the Emperor Leo VI (r. 886–912), was interested in traditions of military practice and compiled a handbook on *Tactics* in which he assembled a great deal of military literature including some material from Plutarch via Polyaenus (second century).<sup>52</sup> Polyaenus used Plutarch's *Lives* – though without crediting his source – together with many other historians to redistribute the evidence he found in their works on military history under the names of the mythical or historical agents.<sup>53</sup> With the Byzantine court developing interest in military practice and history, Polyaenus' *Stratēgēmata* began

49 Since the Constantinopolitan elite frequently borrowed from Plutarch, as this paper demonstrates, Constantine's circle was able to access Plutarch in the original structure of the *Lives*. I disagree with Treadgold (2013: 162, n. 35).

50 Irigoin (1971: 85).

51 Cassius Dio, exc. 106–11, *EVV* 11, 276–8 = *Sull.* 12.3–4; 12.6–9; 13.1–3; 15.3; 22.1 Cassius Dio, exc. 24–7 *ELg* 416–17 = *Sull.* 22.5–23.2; 23.3–4; 24.1; 24.3–4. Büttner-Wobst (1906: 98–99); cf. Boissevain (1895: cvii–cx) and Cassius Dio, ed. Boissevain (1895: 347).

52 Leo VI, *Tactica* 20.798–803 (Polyaen. 2.10.5; *Plu. Lys.* 5), ed. Denis (2010: 592).

53 Polyaenus, *Strat.*, ed. E. Wölfflin and I. Melber (1887).

to enjoy an exceptional popularity. In the ninth and tenth centuries, his biographical arrangement was reclassified according to competing sets of criteria regarding military practice.<sup>54</sup> The thematic reclassification of Polyaenus was parallel to the process in which the practical contents and biographical details of historical works captured readers' interest.

Leo VI composed and delivered *Homilies* (sermons) on special liturgical occasions. He delivered the oration on the anniversary of the death of his father, Basil I, on 29 August 888.<sup>55</sup> This funeral oration paved the way for the imperial ideology regarding Basil (r. 867–886), the founder of the Macedonian dynasty (867–1056), as Constantine VII would follow the same ideology in commissioning and writing the preface for the *Life of Basil* more than half a century later. In the lineage of Basil, Leo traces the ancestry of his family back to the Persian king, Artaxerxes, and cites from his *Life (Artaxerxes)* in Plutarch.<sup>56</sup> In other *homilies*, Leo VI used *Pericles* and *Lysander*.<sup>57</sup>

At Constantine VII's order, two historical projects were launched to continue Theophanes the Confessor's work from 813 in the form of secular biographies. Genesios does not seem to have directly borrowed from Plutarch. However, the other project, which resulted in a series of imperial biographies from 813 to 961 and which is known today as *Theophanes continuatus*, did extensively use the *Parallel lives*.<sup>58</sup> The unknown author of Books 1–4 seems to have borrowed from Plutarch less frequently.<sup>59</sup> The author of the *Life of Basil*, which survives as Book 5 of the series under Constantine VII's alleged authorship, relied extensively on Plutarch's colourful descriptions.<sup>60</sup> For example, he no doubt used *Antony* to portray the Emperor Michael III (842–867).<sup>61</sup> We can assume that the last section of *Theophanes continuatus*, which is referred to

54 See Constantine VII's military collection, Laurentianus Plut. 55.4, ff. 76v–103v, and the private manuscript of Basil the *parakoimōmenos*, imperial chamberlain until 985, Ambrosianus B 119 sup., ff. 162r–185v. On the Byzantine adaptations of Polyaenus, see Schindler (1971: 205–222).

55 Antonopoulou (1997: 61).

56 *Art. 1.1.* in Leo VI, *Homily* 14.134–136, ed. Antonopoulou (2008: 200).

57 Leo VI, *Homily* 10.182–183 (*Per. 1.2*) and 27.123–124, 164–165 (*Lys. 3.2*), ed. Antonopoulou (2008: 152, 375–376).

58 This series survives in Vaticanus gr. 167.

59 *Theoph. cont.*, B. 1–4, ed. Featherstone and Signes-Codoñer (2015: 357) only refers to *Ca. Mi.* See also Pontani (2016: 92) who adds *Arat.* too.

60 See Plutarch in the index of authors in *V. Basiliū*, ed. Ševčenko (2011: 482). The brackets show the frequency of citations. *Agis et Cleom.* (1), *Alex.* (1), *Ant.* (8), *Brut.* (3), *Cat. Ma.* (2), *Comp. Demetr. et Ant.* (1), *Comp. Dion. et Br.* (1), *Cor.* (1), *Dion* (1), *Galb.* (3), *Iul. Caes.* (5), *Luc.* (6), *Lys.* (1), *Pel.* (1), *Them.* (1), *Thes.* (2). A number of citations derive from *Moralia* too.

61 Jenkins (1948: 72, n. 3) and (1954: 17–18, 20, 24).

as Book 6, also used Plutarch. However, for a definitive confirmation of such an assumption we must await a proper critical edition of this last section of *Theophanes continuatus*.

In the 960s, Theodosios the Deacon employed the *Parallel lives* even more extensively. He compiled a long proem in dodecasyllables on the capture of Crete in 961 by Nikephoros Phokas, the future Emperor. Among various ancient poets and historians, he names Plutarch four times.<sup>62</sup> In the preface to his work, Theodosios draws a parallel between the role Plutarch played in the glorification of ancient heroes with that of Homer in his poetry. Later in his poem, Theodosios refers to Plutarch by name when using his accounts on Caesar (l. 256) and Alexander the Great (l. 775). Theodosios frequently borrows from Plutarch's *Lives* when drawing parallels between the present and the past.<sup>63</sup> Perhaps it is not a coincidence that Nikephoros II Phokas traced his line back to the Fabius family, whose most famous member was portrayed in a *Life* by Plutarch (*Fabius Maximus*).<sup>64</sup> The practice of tracing imperial ancestry back to ancient figures seems to have originated in writings that circulated in the second half of the tenth century.

In the 970s, Plutarch possibly influenced the organisation of an actual triumphal event. When giving an account of the triumph John I Tzimiskes (r. 969–976) celebrated after the conquest of Eastern Bulgaria in 971,<sup>65</sup> an unknown source in the imperial circle borrowed words from Plutarch's account on Camillus' triumph over Veii in 396 BC (*Cam.* 7.1). A special setting of the triumphal chariot is described. The newly captured icon of the Virgin and Bulgarian regalia were on display in a carriage and the Emperor rode a horse behind it into the Forum. Leo the Deacon (c. 950–c. 1000), one of the two historians who described this triumphal event, also borrowed from Plutarch at another point in his work.<sup>66</sup> Leo became a member of the Palace clergy after Basil II's ascension to the throne in 976, and he compiled ten books (*Basileiai*) to describe the events from 959–976 in the new biographical fashion and with frequent allusions to ancient historians.

62 Theodosios the Deacon, ed. Criscuolo, preface (1979: 12); ll. 256 (*Caes.*), 765–778.

63 Theodosios the Deacon, *De Creta capta*, ed. Criscuolo, ll. 999–1001 (*Alex.* 6), 752–753 (*Brut.* 17), 13–14 (*Caes.* 2), 782 (*Cor.* 32.1), 988 (*Sol.* 12.6), 8–10 (*Sull.* 14), 260–262 (*Luc.* 9–11). Some parts of the *Moralia* were also cited: ll. 439, 806 (*De facie* 953E), 133 (*De Her. mal.* 867D), 243 (*Quaest. conv.* 646A), 680 (*Reg. et imp. apophth.* 207D), 419 (*De virt. mor.* 446A).

64 M. Attaliates, *Historia*, ed. Tsolakis (2011: 168, 170); ed. Pérez Martín (2002: 159–160); and Markopoulos (2009a: 704).

65 McCormick (1986: 170–175, n. 171). See Leo the Deacon 1.12, ed. Hase (1828: 158.6–7) and John Skylitzes, ed. Thurn (1973: 310.55–7).

66 *Per.* 10.8.1 in Leo the Deacon, 1.6. Talbot and Sullivan (2005: 65 and 200).

Surprisingly, the compilers of the *Suda* lexicon did not directly use Plutarch when the first redaction of this lexicon was compiled in the 970s.<sup>67</sup> The *Suda* assembled more than 31,000 headwords of mostly strictly lexicographic nature, but included proper names. Many citations in the *Suda* which draw on historical works derive not from the respective historians themselves but in fact from the *Excerpta*. The small number of citations from Plutarch's *Lives* in the *Suda* can be explained by the fact that Plutarch was not included in the *Excerpta* project. However, Plutarch is occasionally cited as a reference. The compilers no doubt knew about Plutarch's literary output as it appears from the headword ( $\lambda$  95): "Lamprias, the son of Plutarch of Chaeronea. He wrote the contents of the works his father wrote about all Greek and Roman history."<sup>68</sup> Mentioning Plutarch in the headwords of his nephew, Sextus ( $\sigma$  235) as well as in a headword of another outstandingly prolific writer, Favorinus ( $\varphi$  4), the compilers of the *Suda* assumed that the readers knew Plutarch. The headword "Plutarch" ( $\pi$  1793) only cites Hesychius without offering details about his writings ("he wrote a lot"). The occasional citations from Plutarch derive from other sources<sup>69</sup> such as Aelian,<sup>70</sup> John of Antioch,<sup>71</sup> Cassius Dio or George the Monk.<sup>72</sup>

## 5 Conclusion

In this overview, we revisited the direct encounter with Plutarch's *Lives* in the works of Photios, Arethas, Niketas Magistros and at the courts of emperors Leo VI, Constantine VII, Nikephoros II Phokas and John Tzimiskes. The course of the late ninth and tenth centuries gradually transformed the second-hand notion of Plutarch's *Lives*, as seen in the chronicles of George the Synkellos, into a direct and more creative use of his biographical style, language and historical method. The three-volume edition of his biographical corpus began to be copied for affluent commissioners who admired the new fashion of historical writing which spread from Constantine VII's court. This new appreciation

<sup>67</sup> On the *Suda*, see Matthaios (2006) with bibliography.

<sup>68</sup> On the transmission of the Lamprias catalogue, see Irigoin (1986).

<sup>69</sup> De Boor (1912: 418) and Adler (1932: 705).

<sup>70</sup> E.g., three headwords of the *Suda* ( $\varepsilon$  157,  $\iota$  423,  $\mu$  321) mention Plutarch as author, borrowing the text from Aelian F 111d, ed. Domingo-Forasté (1994).

<sup>71</sup> E.g., *Suda*  $\sigma$  1337, s.v. Σύλλας, includes a reference to Plutarch.

<sup>72</sup> *Suda*  $\delta$  1319 and  $\alpha$  77 include a direct reference to Plutarch's *Parallel lives*, both drawing on the identical passage of Georg. Mon., ed. de Boor (1904: I, 76,8).

for biography instead of chronicle writing established a solid basis for the reception of the *Lives* in the centuries to come.

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# The Reception of Plutarch in Michael Psellos' Philosophical, Theological and Rhetorical Works: an Elective Affinity

*Eudoxia Delli*

## 1 Introduction

For Byzantine scholars Plutarch represented the ideal of universal erudition and a precious part of their cultural capital. He was conceived as the incarnation of Hellenic polymathy linked to morality and reflective devoutness, wafting the intellectual savours of the real or imaginary classical past. Even though he had never been used as a scholastic text, a fact that explains the rareness of Byzantine commentaries on his works,<sup>1</sup> he gained popularity among the cultivated Byzantine readership.

In contrast to the West where the influence of Plutarch stopped with Macrobius<sup>2</sup> before reappearing in the curricula of the first schools of Greek in Italy in the fifteenth century, in the East Plutarch's appeal remained noticeable until the sixth century, before his resurgence in the ninth and the tenth centuries during the so-called Macedonian Renaissance,<sup>3</sup> which coincided with an increased interest in his writings manifested by the number of the copies made of his manuscripts.<sup>4</sup>

A survey of the manuscripts of Plutarch's works copied during the Byzantine period reveals the continuity of his impact on the literary elite (see Németh and Pérez Martín in this volume). Nevertheless, this continuity did not mean uniformity. The changing views and focal points on Plutarch's corpus had been shaped by the shifting historical and cultural frameworks in which they took

<sup>1</sup> Garzya (1998: 19), Pade (2014: 536).

<sup>2</sup> Pade, *op.cit.*

<sup>3</sup> Lemerle (1971). See now Van Deun and Macé (2011).

<sup>4</sup> For the manuscript and textual tradition of Plutarch in Byzantium, see Wilson (1996: 103, 128, 139, 148, 173, 186, 190–191, 235–236, 259, 262, and 269); Garzya (1998: 15–27); Frazier (2012: 1127–1128). For a comprehensive overview of the influence of Plutarch in early Christian writers, as well as of his place in the Byzantine culture, see Frazier (2012: 1173–1175 and 1175–1177) and Pade (2014: 535–536).

place but also by the intellectual preoccupations, the personal motivations and the literary temperament of each thinker across the centuries.

From Clement of Alexandria and Origen to Eusebios of Caesarea and Theodoretos of Cyrrhus and up to the Cappadocian Fathers, the early Christians read Plutarch with the main purpose of establishing connections between ancient Greek wisdom and the Holy Scriptures, working towards an eclectic legitimacy of his Platonism through its Christianisation. The Byzantines would inherit from the Greek Fathers a Plutarch who was already assimilated. The ethical dimension of his works manifest in his major exemplary figures of the past and his conception of biography as a spiritual adventure; his preeminent stylistic model based on a mixture of rhetoric and philosophy, as well as his insistence on the value of education inspired by classical past, offered a timeless inspiration to Byzantine authors. They exploit his works in order to elaborate similar edifying literary genres, seeing at times in Plutarch almost a philosophical authority on the Holy Trinity and a prophetic figure of Christ.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Plutarch held a remarkable position in Byzantine culture through pagan and Christian anthologies and florilegia aiming to save from oblivion what was appraised as essential. Serving as a precious source for compilations and lexica, Plutarch's quotations appear side by side with Hermetic and Neoplatonic texts as in John Stobaios' *Anthology* (early fifth century, see Curnis in this volume), as well as in Christian and sacro-profane florilegia between the eighth and tenth centuries,<sup>6</sup> in the role of a repository of miscellaneous instruction and a vehicle of antiquarian encyclopaedism.

Encyclopaedic pursuits and philological interests formed the mainstream of the Macedonian Renaissance remodelling the intellectual parentage of Byzantine scholars to Hellenic thought. The Christianisation of the past was no longer the priority of thinkers in their approach to pagan literature. The fear of paganism and the tension between Hellenism and Christian Revelation were more subdued after the triumph of Orthodoxy over Iconoclasm and the establishment of its dogmatic framework. Alternative and more inclusive systems of thought and sensibilities sprang up, closely related to a reactivation of the Hellenic philosophical heritage. In the ninth and tenth centuries the preservation of ancient works was summed up mainly in the recovery and transcription into the new minuscule script of manuscripts of classical works as well as in miscellaneous collections and textual criticism.

Emblematic scholars and readers of Plutarch, such as the Patriarch Photios and Arethas of Ceasarea, provided the material textual base (manuscripts) for

<sup>5</sup> Frazier (2012: 1175).

<sup>6</sup> Frazier (2012: 1175).

the transmission of ancient wisdom and a reserved but promising introduction into a deeper and more sophisticated revival and assimilation of Hellenic philosophical literature which more or less intersected with Christianity.

This complex project would be undertaken by the eminent “*Hypatos* of the Philosophers”, Michael Psellos.<sup>7</sup> The eleventh century, a time of prosperity and intellectual effervescence,<sup>8</sup> made more creative and innovative the approach to classical texts. Within this framework Psellos indicated a turning point in the intellectual history of Byzantium by inaugurating a direct and critical dialogue with Hellenic philosophy. Embracing the intellectual and spiritual challenges of his time, Psellos transformed this re-engagement with the Hellenic – mainly Neoplatonic – philosophical sources into a springboard for innovation within Orthodox Christianity, concretised in the reworking of the philosophical and religious traditions in which his intellectual identity was rooted. For this reason, innovation should be sought in the direction of new foci and the subtle syntheses that Psellos created. Revisiting the two-fold Byzantine identity, he provided a more flexible, worldly and inclusive anthropological model as a counterweight to the rigid and rather anti-intellectual ascetic ideal supported by the established religion of his time.

This enterprise, closely related to an original and structured strategy for the understanding of authoritative texts of the past, would supersede the conservatism of earlier periods, fixed in the collection and transmission of Hellenic wisdom, opening up new perspectives for a real and creative use of its content. Plutarch’s reception by Psellos constitutes a rather typical illustration of this approach. As well as on many other aspects, the Byzantine philosopher would be the forerunner of the vast and diverse reception of Plutarch, which would be realised in the following centuries. Plutarch’s impact would reach a peak among the scholars of the Palaiologan period (mainly the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, see e.g. Xenophontos in this volume) before being disseminated through the Byzantines to the Latin West.

<sup>7</sup> On Psellos, his work and his contribution in the intellectual history of Byzantium, see Kriaras (1968); Ljubarskij (2004); Moore (2005); Kaldellis (2007: 191–204); Ierodiakonou (2012); Papaioannou (2014).

<sup>8</sup> Kazdhan-Epstein (1985).

## 2 The Framework of the Reception of Plutarch in Psellos' Writings

Psellos' philosophical training was rather the fruit of his personal “insatiable desire for learning”<sup>9</sup> than the outcome of official educational institutions of his time. Like the bees – a relevant image for the ideal reader echoing Plutarch<sup>10</sup> – Psellos “flies to the meadows of reasoned eloquence, cutting some of the flowers and drinking from others the nectar of a phrase, and in his beehive he makes honey”,<sup>11</sup> fashioning himself and his own work.

Nevertheless, Plutarch's texts seem to have been standard reading for the *literati*, close-knit circles of learned people situated in the periphery of the high schools or the court of the Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos. Psellos was allied to the literary circle of intellectuals associated with the poet and scholar John Mauropous. The famous epigram of the latter (“If possibly you wish to exempt certain pagans from eternal damnation, my Christ, may you for my sake spare Plato and Plutarch, for both were too close to your laws, in both teaching and way of living”)<sup>12</sup> testifies to the religious tolerance of this milieu and its openness to Hellenism and Platonic rhetoric.

In a letter, Psellos requests for a book of Plutarch from his former fellow student Romanos.<sup>13</sup> Plutarch's work as a whole (*kai ta ploutarcheia panta syngrammata*) is also mentioned – together with Demosthenes, Isocrates, Thucydides, Plato, Lysias and Gregory of Nazianzus – in his *On the different types of style of certain writings*,<sup>14</sup> in an enumeration of authoritative texts and authors read by him in order to shape his personal rhetorical expertise. In another oration, entitled *On the rhetorical style of Gregory of Nazianzus*, Psellos refers to Plutarch twice in contrast to Gregory's rhetoric mastery.<sup>15</sup> In the first case, Psellos highly praises Gregory for not following Plutarch's style of writing in his *Parallel lives*, “illustrating inappropriately rhetorical (political) matters

<sup>9</sup> See for instance, Psellos, *Phil. min.* 1, 32.100–106 and *Chronographia* 6.36–43. Translations of Psellos' excerpts are my own, unless otherwise cited.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Plutarch's *De aud. poet.* 30C–D and 32E–F, *De aud.* 41E–42D and *Quaest. conv.* 673D–E. On bee imagery in Plutarch, see Xenophontos (2013).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Encomium for his mother*, lines 1694–1697 and quotation trans. by Walker (2005: section 27) slightly modified. As Criscuolo (1989) notes, the image of the bee also occurs in Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus.

<sup>12</sup> *Ioannis Euchaitorum Metropolitanae quae in codice Vaticano Graeco 676 supersunt*, poem no. 43. 1–5. See also Wilson (1996: 151).

<sup>13</sup> *Scripta Minora* 2, letter 17, p. 22. 10–12. Following Ljubarkji (2004: 72), the interest in Plutarch was possibly cultivated in the school of John Mauropous.

<sup>14</sup> *De operatione daemonum. Accederunt inedita opuscula Pselli*, p. 50. 10 sq.

<sup>15</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus and Plato represent for the Byzantine philosopher the two major models of rhetoric excellence. See *Theologica* 1, 98.44–45.

by analogies from music and geometry".<sup>16</sup> In the second, in a context pertaining to clarity of style, he ascribes the inaccessibility of the *Moralia* to the way in which Plutarch combines the philosophical doctrines, rather than to their literary structure and compositional scheme.<sup>17</sup>

Psellos follows in part the common view of his contemporaries on Plutarch, recognising his rhetorical mastery. He read the same Plutarch, but not in an identical way. His approach was much more extensive, subtle and penetrating. Plutarch's reception in Psellos reveals both his wider philosophical project, embracing the Platonic tradition as a whole in its multiple ramifications, and his writer strategy, using diverse authorial techniques according to the various motivations and thematic fields of each text. Psellos and Plutarch are intertwined in the tangles and superimposed strata of Platonism, sharing complexity, sophistication and eclecticism.

Plutarch, who "in his own mind remained an orthodox Platonist"<sup>18</sup> emerged in the frame of Middle Platonism, representing developments in doctrines that inserted Sceptical, Orphico-Pythagorean and Aristotelian elements in the core of Platonism. His work anticipated, in a simpler and rather unsystematic way, a number of Neoplatonic doctrines and topics<sup>19</sup> found in Iamblichos or Proklos. On the other hand, Psellos did not claim to be an orthodox Platonist in the way Plutarch did. And even though he did not judge Platonism as threatening to distort his Christian Orthodox identity, as part of his contemporaries firmly believed, the continuities and affiliations with the Platonic tradition are in the service of distinctive philosophical and educational preoccupations, focused on the critical intersection of two thought-worlds, in a modified cultural, religious and intellectual context.

As Psellos himself declares several times in his writings, and as the identification of the sources of his works clearly manifests, he is principally inspired by the Neoplatonic writers and commentators. He found mainly in Iamblichos, Synesios of Cyrene, Proklos, John Philoponus and Simplicios the more synthetic and systematic form of Platonism and the emblematic figures who encapsulated and refined all its prior stages. In this sense, the crucial and dominant effect of Neoplatonism on Psellos' thought overlaps and demarcates the impact of Middle Platonism, including Plutarch. For this reason, the research into the traces of Plutarch in Psellos' texts sometimes becomes problematic. It could be unsound to ascribe exclusively to Plutarch a specific doctrine or topic,

<sup>16</sup> Psellos' *On the rhetorical style of Gregory of Nazianzus*, section 15, 274–276 Mayer.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, section 21, 387–396.

<sup>18</sup> Dillon (2014: 72).

<sup>19</sup> For the relation between Neoplatonists and Plutarch, see Frazier (2002: 1172–1173).

a symbolic image or a hermeneutic scheme used by Psellos, because this could also have been drawn from later Neo-Platonist thinkers, more or less modified. Rather, we have to deal with doctrinal and methodological interconnections between different strata of Platonism that are rather difficult to be identified and untangled.

It should be noted that Psellos rarely refers openly to Plutarch as a philosopher. In his *Theologica* 2 he mentions Plutarch's name twice: once in order to distinguish the Chaeronean from Plutarch of Athens (c. 350–430 AD),<sup>20</sup> Proklos' master in the Neoplatonic school of Athens, and yet again, in a passage on pastoral virtue inspired by Gregory of Nazianzus' apologetic discourse entitled *In defence of his flight to Pontus, and his return, after his ordination to the priesthood, with an exposition of the character of the priestly office*.<sup>21</sup> Also in a satirical poem, addressed by Psellos to an arrogant and uneducated monk, the "wise Plutarch" is mentioned along with other ancient Greek philosophers, poets, rhetoricians and historians.<sup>22</sup>

In spite of Psellos' reluctance to name Plutarch, he draws on his work to a considerable extent. The traces of this borrowing, identified by the modern editors of his work, can be hard to perceive because Psellos' Plutarchan quotations are cut off from their original contexts and reformulated by the versatile style of the Byzantine scholar who constantly underlines that the Philosopher and the Wise Man ought to be multifarious (*pantodapos*),<sup>23</sup> recognising for himself that "I am one originating in many. Yet if someone reads my books, many from one might appear".<sup>24</sup> Without being absorbed by his influences, Psellos' thought and sensibility is animated within this intertextual journey.

The Byzantine scholar owes to Plutarch much more than he reports. He draws on the *Moralia* and the *Parallel lives* in a multitude of ways from simple expressions, terms, locutions to elaborated quotations of theoretical conceptions, images, arguments, anecdotal narratives as well as significant allusions on the edificatory tales of the *Parallel lives* which he adapts, more or less transformed and even fragmented, within his orations and letters. The influence of Plutarch can also be seen in Psellos' philosophical interpretations, teaching texts and theological commentaries, covering a large spectrum of topics and thematic areas that range from the representation of God, religious matters

<sup>20</sup> *Theologica* 2, 37.29.

<sup>21</sup> See *Theol.* 2, 6.56 and Gregory of Nazianzus PG 35, *Oratio* 2.13 (421. 28–31).

<sup>22</sup> *Poemata* 68, 30.

<sup>23</sup> *Theol.* 1, 68.86–87 and 114.1–5. See also *Oratoria minora* 36.27–29 and *Orationes panegyricae* 17.107–108.

<sup>24</sup> *De operatione daemonum. Accederunt inedita opuscula, op. cit.*, p. 52, lines 8–10. Trans. by Papaioannou (2013: 127).

and experiences, ethics, politics as well as natural philosophy, medicine and physiology. Psellos moves freely into Plutarch's texts establishing interior associations and even creative distortions, in a way that renders the borrowings almost unrecognisable.

Within this general framework, in the following pages I shall present case-studies illustrating the reception of Plutarch in Psellos' philosophical and theological works as well as in some of his rhetorical texts and letters. Mainly based on the *apparatus fontium* of the respective edited volumes of the Psellian corpus, our research does not claim to be exhaustive, but aims to bring light to the key aspects of Plutarch's impact on Psellos. More study than what is offered here could help to develop and evaluate them further.

### 3 Philosophical Works

I. In *Philosophica minora* 1 evidence on Plutarch is detected only once. It arises in the treatise *On Meteorology* (opuscle 19. 215–223), and has no connection with the main subject. In this case Psellos depends mainly on the Neoplatonic Olympiodoros and his commentary of Aristotle's *Meteorologica*, as he does also in relevant sections of the *Omnifaria doctrina*.

In the conclusion to his treatise, addressing his disciples, Psellos underlines his effort to be concise and brief in commenting on many doctrines professed by preceding philosophers, "imitating as much as is possible the style of Phocion", who conveyed "the greatest meaning in the fewest words possible" (*Phoc.* 5.4–5).<sup>25</sup> Psellos seems to embrace Plutarch's view of Phocion, also mentioned in the *Life of Demosthenes*, as the most influential speaker in Athens since "he expressed most sense in the fewest words believing that a single word or nod from a man who is trusted, has more power than very many long sentences" (*Dem.* 10.3–5). Because of his effective oratory and his virtuous life and reputation, Phocion acts for the playful Byzantine scholar as a kind of eminent persona with whom he is identified, casting light in an oblique manner both on facets of his multileveled self and his theoretical preoccupations related to the triptych of philosophy, politics and rhetoric, always oscillating between the possible and the ideal. The persona of Phocion has an eminent place in his writings in comparison to other protagonists of the *Parallel lives*, as we shall see briefly below. Giving them the status of symbols, Psellos infuses them with a new life in the Byzantine imaginary.

<sup>25</sup> The translations of Plutarch's *Lives* are taken from the Loeb Classical Library by B. Perrin, slightly modified.

The figure of *Phocion* represents an embodied pattern of perfection compatible with Psellos' conceptions of political virtue combined with rhetoric and with his ideal of the intermediary life, neither totally spiritual nor material, which was inspired mainly by the Neoplatonic theory of the hierarchy of virtues.<sup>26</sup> While Psellos draws upon the later Neoplatonism the conceptual tools to elaborate these issues, he finds in Plutarch's *Phocion* the palpable incarnation the ideal standard of political virtue, projecting it also on other persons. For instance, Phocion's rhetorical mastery (*Phoc.* 5) is also ascribed by Psellos to his friend and colleague John Xiphilinos,<sup>27</sup> specialist in many fields of knowledge, in the defence of the latter against Ophrydas who accuses Xiphilinos of "freethinking".

*Phocion* emerges several times in Psellos' writings. This fact suggests that Plutarch's *Lives* were commonly known among his interlocutors – disciples, colleagues and friends to whom he addresses his letters and speeches. Psellos' allusions to the Athenian general, politician and statesman tend to be epigrammatic yet significant, albeit often ambiguous.

In a letter to the Patriarch Michael Kerouarios, Psellos mentions Phocion twice.<sup>28</sup> He compares himself and some of the Prophets with Phocion, commenting in an ironic tone on their probable humble origins (*Phoc.* 4.1–2), in contrast to those of Kerouarios. After having rejected Kerouarios' deficient philosophical knowledge, reduced to occult wisdom and practices, Psellos speaks about his own misfortunes caused by his involvement in public life, and says that he "dies with Phocion" (*Phoc.* 36.4). Phocion's condemnation and death in 328 BC revives the memory of Socrates who was comforted by his friends during his final hours in prison (*Phoc.* 34–37). Thus, through Phocion, Psellos incites his reader to think about the diachronically precarious position of the philosopher involved in politics and the value of friendship as well.

In another letter addressed to his beloved master and friend John Mauropous,<sup>29</sup> Psellos once more compares himself to Phocion, the "great asset of Attica and cleaver of Demosthenes' speeches", as he calls him. Just as Phocion, known for his firmness, was touched and transformed by the esteem and the honorific greeting of Alexander the Great (*Phoc.* 17.9–10), so too Psellos could be transformed by Mauropous' earnest compliments into a *hierophantēs* or a prophet who would utter enigmatic oracles.

<sup>26</sup> On this issue, see O'Meara (2012: 153–170). On Psellos' expressed preference for "political virtue", see *De omnifaria doctrina*, section 71.14–15.

<sup>27</sup> *Orationes forenses et Acta* 3.114–118.

<sup>28</sup> *Epistola a Michele Cerulario*, lines 77–79 and 256–257. See the translation of these passages in Kaldellis-Polemis (2015: 41 and 48).

<sup>29</sup> Μεταιωνυχή Βιβλιοθήκη, *Bibliotheca graeca medii aevi* 5, letter 182, p. 463.

Moreover, Psellos brings to light some ambiguous sides of Phocion's character. In his oration entitled *On the character of the protosynkellos' virtue*, Psellos states with a subtly ironic note that "the protosynkellos points to the heroic<sup>30</sup> way of living, while our humankind is of distinct nature, rather ever-changing than inflexible. For this reason, the protosynkellos – like Phocion and Cato, and Pericles before them – because of his exceptional uprightness, appears to be unsociable to most people; and that's the utmost of the austere character".<sup>31</sup>

Both Phocion and Cato are mentioned in the funeral orations to Patriarch Constantine Leichoudes and to his friend Niketas as well, approached from different points of view. On the one hand, Psellos praises Leichoudes who "coarsened his standard of living and, in fact, his entire life by imitating Phocion and Cato (*Phoc.* 3.6–7), or by emulating the justice of Aristides (*Arist.* 6.1–2) in his many positions and acts of authority".<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, in his oration devoted to Niketas, Psellos says that Niketas "unlike Phocion and Cato, who appeared heavy, intolerable and unable to be adjusted to any circumstances, he didn't lose himself among everyday concerns".<sup>33</sup>

Finally, in the oration entitled *On friendship to the nephews of the Patriarch Kyr Michael Kerouarios* – which is largely inspired by the treatise *On brotherly love* of Plutarch's *Moralia* – Phocion appears in the context where Psellos praises their uncle and father for their firm brotherly union that reminds him of Phocion's oneness in manifoldness,<sup>34</sup> "being Roman and equal to a hero and transcending his time and a real Philosopher as well". Psellos continues – based apparently on an amalgam of Plutarch's *Phocion* (4.3–4) and of a quotation

<sup>30</sup> According to Psellos, apparently following the Neoplatonic hierarchy of superior classes of beings, the "hero" comes after God, angels and demons and before humans. See *Philos. min.* 2, 11, p. 150. 25–26 and *De omnifaria doctrina*, section 85 and Iamblichos (*De mysteriis*, Book 2). So the term "heroic" corresponds to a way of living more close to angels than to humans. Cf. also Plutarch *De def. or.* 414F–415B. For the origin of this classification, see Plato, *Rep.* 427b.

<sup>31</sup> *Orat. paneg.* 15.10–15. The Protosynkellos Leo Paraspondylos and the Patriarch Kerouarios, criticised both by Psellos in several occurrences of his work, represent for the Byzantine philosopher a rather inflexible and unsociable anthropological model fixed to eternity and insufficient for earthly life. This model, promoted by the established spirituality of his time, is situated in the opposite pole of his own ideal based on the mixed life. For a deeper and extensive analysis on Psellos' criticism towards Leo and most generally towards the monks in his *Chronographia*, see O'Meara (2012: 162–163). In the above oration, Psellos treats Leo with more indulgence. On Psellos' floating relation both with Kerouarios and Leo, see Ljubarskij (2004: 125–149).

<sup>32</sup> *Orationes funebres* 1.2, 8.51–52. Trans. by Kaldellis-Polemis (2015: 146).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* 4, 7.13–15. Trans. by Papaioannou (2013: 184) with minor modifications.

<sup>34</sup> *Orat. min.* 31.234–241.

drawn directly from the beginning of the *Life of Plotinos* of Porphyry<sup>35</sup> – by adding that Phocion, “ashamed of being in body, he always kept his hands covered; so that when he uncovered them, just as astrologers could predict the appearance of comets, this was a sign that a heat wave was coming.” And he concludes by noticing that “equally unexpected and hence remarkable was to see the two brothers separate from each other”.

The original passages of Plutarch’s *Phocion*<sup>36</sup> are combined and distorted in Psellos’ version. Phocion is “neoplatonised”. He is presented as a radical Neoplatonist or a harsh ascetic embarrassed by his bodily existence. For Psellos, Phocion’s uncovered hands are seen as an augury of intense heat, just like his wearing of a cloak is said by Plutarch to anticipate the arrival of severe winter.

II. In *Philosophica minora* 2, in a treatise entitled *Philosophical essay on the soul*, the Byzantine philosopher and master is called to answer two questions put forward probably by one of his disciples, who is aptly called by Psellos “Critias” – one of the interlocutors of Socrates in the Platonic *Timaeus* – probably because he asks him learned questions about nature.<sup>37</sup>

The first question is about the controversial issue of the “increase” of the soul and the second concerns the elements of fire and of water and especially “which of the two could be destroyed by the other”. In order to respond to the latter question, Psellos draws his inspiration mainly<sup>38</sup> from the *On the first cold* of the *Moralia*, an original contribution to theoretical physics, where Plutarch wonders whether or not cold has an independent existence apart from heat, and if the Cold is an element really existing in nature. Plutarch cites relevant Stoic, pre-Socratic and early Peripatetic doctrines and attempts to prove (with a certain scepticism) that cold depends not on air or on water by rather on the earth itself.

Based on an eclectic integration of doctrinal material from the *On the first cold* concerning the nature and the relation of fire and water (950E–F; 950F–951A; 952A–B), Psellos concludes that each one is “corrupted and destroyed by its

35 *Vita Plotini* 1.1–2. In a similar way, in the *Encomium for his mother* (lines 1036–1037), depicting a hagiographical portrait of her, Psellos relates his mother’s discomfort to be in body.

36 *Phoc.* 4.3–4: “For hardly any Athenian ever saw Phocion in laughter or in tears, or making use of a public bath, as Duris tells us, or holding his hand outside his cloak, – when he wore a cloak. Since in the country, at least, and on his campaigns, he always walked without shoes or outer garment, unless the cold was excessive and hard to bear, so that presently his soldiers used to say in jest that it was a sign of severe winter when Phocion wore a cloak”.

37 *Phil. min.* 2, 16, pp. 81.15–82.6.

38 Psellos also draws on Aristotle’s *On the heavens*, *On generation and corruption* and *Physics*.

opposite" and does not change into the other. Psellos' reproduction of the argument is apparently fragmentary and simplified. It does not include all the doctrinal and doxographic elements present in Plutarch's relevant argumentation, nor his references to Aeschylus, Homer and Archilochus. Nevertheless, Psellos chooses to mention in brief, as "embellishment" to his theoretical treatment, a Persian custom of supplication reported in detail by Plutarch.

This passage of Psellos introduces us to the domain of natural philosophy and Greek natural science. The scientific understanding of nature and the physical explanations of natural and medical phenomena, together with the interaction between body and soul, embracing also marvels and miracles, are at the core of Psellos' worldly focused inquiry.<sup>39</sup> Moreover the study of nature (*physiologia*) provides Man with the understanding of the Created world<sup>40</sup> and its intelligible principles.

On these points, Plutarch (and pseudo-Plutarch) is a depository of knowledge for the eager to learn Byzantine scholar who follows him also in integrating scientific digressions into his literary writings.<sup>41</sup>

The Byzantine philosopher finds in Plutarchan natural speculation a precious complement to his natural philosophy firmly grounded in Neoplatonic sources and in patristic natural theology, with its subversive effects of Christian Creation and Eschatology. The research on Psellos' dependence on Plutarch in this particular field, shed light on some peripheral and less explored aspects of Psellos' natural knowledge. Originally stemming from the Peripatetic tradition before the Neoplatonic *synthesis* (*symp̄hōnia*) of Platonism and Aristotelianism, these aspects include not only pure inquiry but also practical interests, rather rare in the Neoplatonic writers.

III. The *De omnifaria doctrina* (*Multifarious instruction*) is a central and emblematic piece of writing for the all-embracing educational programme of Psellos. It includes a multidimensional teaching, divided into 201 sections on various topics, ranging from theology, psychology and ethics to physics, physiology, astronomy, meteorology and cosmography, and ending with a series of diversified questions and naturalistic curiosities borrowed from the *Natural questions* and the *Table talk* of Plutarch's *Moralia*.

As the editor of the *De omnifaria doctrina* notes, its plan obviously deals with the subjects treated in pseudo-Plutarch's *Doctrines of the philosophers*<sup>42</sup>

39 See Kaldellis (2007: 204).

40 *Poems* 53.39–42.

41 Boulogne (2008: 733–749).

42 The attribution of the *Placita philosophorum* to Plutarch dates back to Eusebios of Caesarea (*Preparation for the Gospel* 1, 7.16.6–7).

from which however as a rule only the headings of the sections are taken. Psellos rearranged the order of the thematic sections inspired by the *Doctrines of the philosophers* but he developed them by relying mostly on other textual authorities, mainly Neoplatonic and patristic.

The impact of the pseudo-Plutarchan *Doctrines of the philosophers* on Psellos' writings is diverse and wider than it appears to be in the strict framework of *De omnifaria doctrina*. It is clearly detected in a rather stereotypical manner in his theological writings while it is less noticeable in the rhetorical ones. Also, numerous treatises of the *Philosophica minora*<sup>43</sup> owe their headings to *Doctrines of the philosophers*, in spite of the fact that their contents are based mainly on other sources<sup>44</sup> (such as pseudo-Galen, Porphyry, Aristotle, Olympiodoros and John Lydos). What concerns us here is the fact that Psellos reproduces a pseudo-Plutarchan model when questioning the natural world and physical phenomena. Besides, in treating philosophical questions Psellos seems to share with pseudo-Plutarch similar methodological approaches towards the history of philosophy. For instance, both expose the views of preceding philosophers on the treated subject often without any context, as a simple statement of fact or argument, and both reject opposing views. They use literal quotations, paraphrases or more individual interpretations of extracts re-elaborated in the light of their own philosophical queries and solutions.

Nevertheless, the variety of opinions put forth does not interest pseudo-Plutarch and Psellos to the same extent. When citing opinions of ancient Greek philosophers, Psellos often refers to them *en bloc* calling them "the philosophers" rather than naming them individually. In addition, the identity of the sources used in Psellos and pseudo-Plutarch is different. The former's focus and adherence to the Neoplatonic<sup>45</sup> and patristic lineage are evidently

43 Some of the topics treated in *Phil. min.* 1 are also present in the meteorological part of the *De omnifaria doctrina*, with almost the same headings, in a less elaborate form. See, for instance, *Phil. min.* 1, 20 and *De omn. doctr.* sect. 140; *ibid.* 21 and sect. 146; *ibid.* 22 and sections 147–150; *ibid.* 23 and sections 142–145; *ibid.* 24 and sections 123–125, 139; *ibid.* 28 and sect. 149; *ibid.* 29 and sect. 164.

44 With two exceptions detected. Both are found in the opusculum 16 of *Phil. min.* 1, in the context of embryonic questions: the first concerns the causes of monstrous births (lines 188–206) and the second the semen (lines 133–158). In these cases Psellos is inspired respectively by *Plac. philos.* 905F–906A and 905B–C.

45 In the synthetic and comprehensive character of the Neoplatonic thought, Psellos finds a recapitulation of the whole Ancient Greek philosophy, as part of the enterprise of conciliation of Plato and Aristotle. Especially Simplikios is for Psellos a precious and alternative source of doxographic elements, much more sophisticated and critical than Plutarch. See for instance, *De omnifaria doctrina*, sections 38, 45 and 46 based on Simplikios' commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*.

manifested by the large number of relevant quotations, and fewer citations – given that Psellos rarely cites his sources. Moreover, in the second plan of the *De omnifaria doctrina*, Psellos attempts an advanced integration of Hellenic thought with the Christian understanding of God, world and man, aiming to broaden and enrich the latter without affecting its core dogmas.

In the thematic fields of theology (ss. 1–20), psychology (ss. 21–65) and ethics (ss. 66–81) the impact of the pseudo-Plutarchan *Doctrines of the philosophers*, apart from the headings, is clearly limited.<sup>46</sup> In the part concerning physics (ss. 82–107),<sup>47</sup> only a few echoes of the first book of the *Doctrines of the philosophers* are resonant in the sections entitled *On what is the difference between a principle and an element* (s. 82), *On principles, and what they are* (s. 83), *On bodies* (s. 92) as well as *On those things that are least in nature* (s. 93).

Conversely, in the part devoted to physiology (ss. 108–119), Psellos draws more largely upon the fourth and fifth books of the *Doctrines of the philosophers*, dealing with subjects such as *Of the five sensations* (s. 108),<sup>48</sup> medicine and embryonic questions (ss. 110–115),<sup>49</sup> as well as with the topic *On health, sickness and old age* (s. 117).<sup>50</sup> Psellos also incorporates in physiology two questions about thirst<sup>51</sup> and hunger<sup>52</sup> and a psychophysiological explanation of the “evil eye”,<sup>53</sup> all based on an eclectic use of questions treated by Plutarch in the fifth

<sup>46</sup> See section 15.1–4 (“What is God”) and *Plac. philos.* 880D and 881D–E; section 18.3–5 (“From what element God did begin to raise the fabrication of the world”) and *Plac. philos.* 887A–C; section 19.3–8 (“Whence did men obtain the representation of the God”) and *Plac. philos.* 879C and 880A–B.

<sup>47</sup> The term physics has to be understood in a broad sense. In antiquity and the Middle Ages “physics” included several topics on theology, psychology or cosmology, given their close interrelation. For this reason, questions such as Providence, Fate, Evil or Time are treated in this specific part.

<sup>48</sup> In fact, this section is an eclectic amalgam of *Plac. philos.* 901A, 901B–C and 901E–F, 902A–B and 903C.

<sup>49</sup> Sect. 110 (*How it is that conceptions are made*) and *Plac. philos.* 905C–D; s. 111 (*After what manner males and females are generated*) and *Plac. philos.* 905D–F; s. 112 (*How it comes to pass that a woman's too frequent conversation with a man hinders conception*) and *Plac. philos.* 906A–B; s. 113 (*Whence it is that one birth gives two or three children*) and *Plac. philos.* 906B–C; s. 114 (*Whence it is that children represent or not their parents*) and *Plac. philos.* 906C–E; s. 115, 5–7, 9–10 and 12–13 (*Whether the infant is a vivant and how is nourished*) and *Plac. philos.* 907C–E. In the last section Psellos reports the opinions of Hippocrates, Galen and Porphyry. In these sections, Psellos engages through pseudo-Plutarch with a wide range of ancient Greek medical topics and writers without explicit reference to them. See Volk (1990: 175–181).

<sup>50</sup> Cf. especially lines 1–7 with *Plac. philos.* 911A–B and lines 7–11 with *Plac. philos.* 909A–B.

<sup>51</sup> Section 118 and *Quaest. conv.* 686E–687B.

<sup>52</sup> Section 119 and *Quaest. conv.* 689A and 689E–690A.

<sup>53</sup> Section 109 and *Quaest. conv.* 681A–D.

and sixth books of his *Table talk*. Among these topics, the explanation for the “evil eye”<sup>54</sup> relates physiology with common belief and cultural anthropology, bringing to light unconscious psychic processes and their psychosomatic effects on the body. Psellos, through the mediation of Plutarch, communicates with a number of influences (Empedocles, Democritus, Theophrastus) converged in the Plutarchan explanation relating the Platonic theory of vision and the role of *pneuma*, drawn from the *Problems* of pseudo-Aristotle.<sup>55</sup> The *pneuma* is considered as “a pulsing stream of emanations” which, passing through the human eye, can have a powerful and harmful impact upon other recipients. Psellos summarises Plutarch, without hesitating to include that erotic affects also rely on this process of ocular emission and penetration.<sup>56</sup> As he states, “a current of particles causes the lover to melt and be dissolved when he looks at those who are beautiful, even if he remains at a distance from them, lighting a fire in his soul and affecting the bodies of both by the diffusion of the ocular emanations”. As for the sections entitled *What is the reason that those that are fasting are more thirsty than hungry* (s. 118), and *What is the reason that hunger is allayed by drinking, but thirst increased by eating* (s. 119), according to Sven-Tage Teodorsson,<sup>57</sup> Psellos draws upon a Peripatetic source, not following Plutarch completely. In the first case, he deals with the theory of the four opposite qualities and human physiology linked to the theory of combustion and, in the second, with the relation of humoral theory and digestion.

In the next parts of the *De omnifaria doctrina* – embracing astronomy, meteorology and cosmography (ss. 120–179) – Plutarch’s and pseudo-Plutarch’s influence is rather limited. It is the Neoplatonic commentator of Aristotle Olympiodoros who prevails as the dominant source in the Psellian treatment of these points. Nevertheless, in the sections entitled *Into how many circles is the heaven distinguished* (s. 122), *On the order of the stars* (s. 134), *On how many circulations make up the “great year” of every planet* (s. 137) and *On the stars called the Dioscuri* (s. 138), the Byzantine scholar mainly borrows from the second book of the *Doctrines of the philosophers*.<sup>58</sup> We detect also a group of

54 According to Teodorsson (1990: 197), Plutarch’s *Table talk* problem “On the bewitching eye” (68oB–683B) is the earliest treatment of this subject preserved in Greek literature. Our treatment on *Table talk*’s problems is inspired by his relevant and exhaustive commentary. See especially for this topic, *id.* 197–214.

55 Cf. Oikonomopoulou (2011); Meeusen (2016).

56 The concept of *pneuma* has relevance to physiology and medicine as well as to religious experiences.

57 See above notes 51 and 52 and Teodorsson (1990: 240 and 259).

58 Cf. *Plac. philos.* 888C with section 122; 889A–B with section 134; 892B–C with section 137; 889D with section 138.

four sections, concerning the *Way the world had been composed* (s. 151), and the themes *Of a vacuum* (s. 153), *Of place* (s. 154) and *Of space* (s. 155), where Psellos makes a selective use of the first book of the *Doctrines of the philosophers*,<sup>59</sup> sometimes refuting and reformulating Plutarch's reported opinions.<sup>60</sup>

In the following sections of the *De omnifaria doctrina*, especially from 168 to 173 and from 179 to 193, Psellos accomplishes an unexpected change of focus. He draws almost exclusively from Plutarch's *Table talk* and the *Natural questions*, presenting a selective and sometimes critical re-elaboration of several questions and problems.

Adopting the *Table talk*'s complex and elastic form, Psellos comes into contact with a number of scientific sources and physicians (mainly in the fields of medicine and botany) affiliated with the Peripatetic and Stoic tradition.<sup>61</sup> To the same desire for intellectual variety corresponds Psellos' use of the *Natural questions* of Plutarch.<sup>62</sup> It is within these conceptual frameworks that Psellos' philosophy of nature is "broadened" in order to encompass practical techniques and careful observation.

The Byzantine scholar chooses to introduce into his *De omnifaria doctrina* nine problems from the *Table talk* and fifteen questions and answers from the *Natural questions*. However, he does not keep the borrowed material intact. He omits the rich peripheral material provided by Plutarch, especially in the case of the *Table talk*. The doxographic references, together with the anecdotal narratives and information of ethnographical, antiquarian and cultural interest, which are innate to the literary genre of the *symposium*, are almost vanished in Psellos' versions, focusing mainly on the natural-philosophical components of the Plutarchan explanations. He retains the core of Plutarch's explanations, reshaping them. In some instances, not only does he change or delete some terms or phrases, but, when he disagrees with Plutarch's views, he replaces them with his own without citing him or entering into a dialogue with him,<sup>63</sup> or he advances more in the solution of some questions than Plutarch.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, Psellos intertwines the conceptual material drawn

59 Cf. *Plac. philos.* 878C with section 151; 883E–F with section 153; 884A with section 154; 884A–B with section 155.

60 See for example, section 160. 2–6 (*What is the cause of the world's inclination*) in relation to *Plac. philos.* 887E–F and section 138 to 889D.

61 For Peripateticism as a key intellectual strand in *Table talk*, see Oikonomopoulou (2011) and Meeusen (2016).

62 On Plutarch's *Quaest. nat.* in Psellos' *De omnifaria doctrina*, see Meeusen (2012).

63 Cf. section 118 with *Quaest. conv.* 686E–687B and section 188 with *Quaest. conv.* 684D. See also Teodorsson (1990: 222–223).

64 Cf. section 170 with *Quaest. conv.* 685B.

from Plutarch with extracts or ideas inspired by other authors, Christian or pagan.<sup>65</sup> He also unifies passages from both Plutarchan works<sup>66</sup> or combines two questions of the *Natural questions* into a single section.<sup>67</sup> Finally, the order in which topics are treated in the relevant works of Plutarch is rearranged by Psellos, so that it serves his approach better.

The Byzantine scholar insists on the idea that “nothing in nature happens without a cause, even though many things escape human understanding”. Taking into account the limits of reasoning and knowledge, as Plutarch states too,<sup>68</sup> Psellos recognises, citing the Platonic *Timaeus* (30b7–8),<sup>69</sup> “that it is hard to understand and to express firm views about the natural world” and that “Man has to settle for the most plausible explanations”, reminding us also Proklos’ thesis of the plausibility (*eikotologia*) as inherent to the understanding of Nature (*physiologia*).<sup>70</sup>

According to these principles, Psellos treats a number of questions related to a wide range of scientific fields (arboriculture, agriculture, horticulture, botany, geology, zoology and sealife, physics, physiology and the theory of humours) in order to provide reasonable explanations of numerous natural observations, popular beliefs and paradoxes.

The conceptual cohesion of all these varied explanations, which at first sight look slightly haphazard and disparate, is obtained through the convergence of three axes that show the interconnectedness of natural things: the identification and the evaluation of the causal connections and interactions between different kinds of qualities (wet, dry, cold, warm, sweet, bitter heavy, light) and of elements (water, fire, air, earth) inherent to matter, physical bodies and species; the designation of the features and effects of natural chemical compounds (water/seawater/rainwater/snow, salt, oil and wine) and of chemical elements (such as sulphur) and minerals, manifested in natural processes and phenomena; and finally the investigation of *sympathies* and *antipathies*<sup>71</sup> and of their intersections as causal forces producing many effects and marvels in the vegetal, animal and mineral world, recalling a complex network

65 Cf. sections 182, 187, 189 and section 193.

66 See section 180. 1–9 and 9–12 with *Quaest. nat.* 912D–F and *Quaest. conv.* 684F, 685B–C.

67 See section 186 and *Quaest. nat.* 915D–F.

68 See *Camillus* 6. 6 and *De prim. fr.* 955C.

69 See sections 187.8–12 and 189.8–12 and *Phil. min.* 1, 16.268. See also *Bibliotheca graeca mediæ aevi* 5, letter 188, p. 477. In this letter, Psellos argues that paradoxes and marvels are due to human incapacity to comprehend the natural causes of everything. For a parallel in Plutarch, see *Against the Stoics on common conceptions* 1077C–E.

70 In *Plat. Tim. comm.* 1, 350.18–20.

71 See also *Orat. min.* 37.366–368 and *Plac. philos.* 886D–E. Cf. also Leffort (2013) on *sympathy* and *antipathy* in *Geoponica* (tenth century).

of influences and associations of Empedoclean, Peripatetic (Theophrastus), Pythagorean (Bolus of Mendes), (pseudo)-Democritean and Stoic origin.<sup>72</sup> The focus that is placed on the physical level of causality and the proximate material causes, in understanding natural phenomena, indicates a passage from philosopher to natural scientist (*physikos*), as Plutarch demarcates it in *On the first cold* (948B–C).<sup>73</sup>

Psellos' natural philosophy of a strictly speculative character inspired by sophisticated Neoplatonic commentaries – including both physical and intelligible levels of causality – is converted, under the impact of the Chaeronean master, to naturalistic curiosity closer to the living experience of nature and to questions arising from surprising observations and from practices, affirming an empirical scientific approach. The *De omnifaria doctrina* at its closure moves towards its end in a rather diverting tone unifying pedagogy and the pleasure of science.

#### 4      Theological Works

Most of Psellos' theological texts are exegeses of “obscure” passages from the Bible, of verses of the Gospels as well as of fragments of Gregory of Nazianzus' theological orations. It is precisely in these writings that his project of critical conciliation between paganism and Christianity's philosophical and religious traditions reaches its peak. The message of Christian Revelation, the meaning of sacred texts and the inheritance of the patristic tradition, together with the religious symbolism of the Orthodox faith, are reinterpreted and deepened, principally by the selective and mostly implicit use of Neoplatonic philosophy. In this way, despite dealing with matters which could lead easily to misunderstanding, Psellos draws parallels between Christian and pagan spirituality, promoting a pluralistic and more comprehensive spiritual anthropology that revises the hermeneutical inflexibility of the established Orthodoxy of his time, without however getting into a doctrinal muddle.

I. In Psellos' *Theologica* 1 the influence of Plutarch is rather sporadic and stereotypical. It is mainly related to doxographic digressions, based on the pseudo-Plutarchan *Doctrines of the philosophers*, which are integrated into

<sup>72</sup> Perhaps more research on Psellos' affiliation with the tradition of natural sciences – focusing on the properties of matter, the elements, the natural chemical compounds and taking into account the physical and occult forces of *sympathies* and *antipathies* in nature – could offer a supplementary link, beyond the scope of Neoplatonic natural philosophy, between Psellos' understanding of nature and his alchemical interests.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. on this point, Karamanolis (2014: 9–10).

Psellos' interpretations on the issues of the Creation of the World and related topics<sup>74</sup> – such as the Principles and their difference from the Elements,<sup>75</sup> the heavens and the celestial bodies,<sup>76</sup> the fifth element,<sup>77</sup> Fate, and Men's representations or misrepresentations of God. Psellos uses the opinions of ancient Greek philosophers, in order either to enrich his argumentation or to contrast them with the relevant Christian dogmas and to reject them. It is mainly the first book of the *Doctrines of the philosophers* that has a dominant place in *Theologica 1*. Most of *Doctrines of the philosophers*' passages used in *Theologica 1* exist, more or less modified, in relevant sections of *De omnifaria doctrina* too.

This intertextuality explains on the one hand that Psellos resorts systematically to pseudo-Plutarch whenever he wants to insert a brief but significant account of pre-Socratic, Platonic and Aristotelian opinions of doxographic character – obviously for educational purposes. On the other hand, it establishes the internal cohesion between his different writings, which sheds light on his key readings and authorial techniques.

For instance, in opusculum 23<sup>78</sup> Psellos, inspired by Gregory of Nazianzus, offers a sophisticated interpretation of the diverse modes in which ancient Greek philosophers and religious traditions, as well as the Christian tradition, have conceived of the way the world was composed,<sup>79</sup> along with the subsequent representations of the Divine. In another theological exegesis, we find once again the Aristotelian definition of nature “as the principle of movement and rest” drawn from the *Doctrines of the philosophers* 875B, which figures also in section 57 of the *De omnifaria doctrina*.<sup>80</sup> In the same text, Psellos refutes the idea of the ‘Greeks’ (*Plac. philos.* 884F–885B) on the absolute governing power of Fate and accepts its impact exclusively on the physical level of

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<sup>74</sup> See *Theol. 1*, 6.70–85 with *Plac. philos.* 875D–878C and *De omn. doctr.* section 83; *Theol. 1*, 49.58–61 with *Plac. philos.* 878B and *De omn. doctr.* sections 82 and 83.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. *Theol. 1*, 61.19–22 with *Plac. philos.* 878A; *Theol. 1*, 95.102, 104 and *Plac. philos.* 875D, 876A and 876B. See *De omn. doctr.* sections 82–83 too.

<sup>76</sup> See *Theol. 1*, 47.51–52 and *Plac. philos.* 888E.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. *Theol. 1*, 50.12–18 and *Plac. philos.* 878B.

<sup>78</sup> See *Theol. 1*, 23.9–16 and 21–22 with *Plac. philos.* 878C–F and 876D together with *De omn. doctr.* section 151.

<sup>79</sup> According to Psellos, on the question of the number of principles, the model of “Anarchy” is provided by Epicurus, Democritus and Anaxagoras. Egyptians and Chaldeans assume the model of “Polyarchy”, while Pythagoras and Plato combine “Monarchy” and “Polytheism”. Finally, Christians promote the model of “Monarchy”. See *Plac. philos.* 875D–878C and 878C–F and *De omn. doctr.* section 151.

<sup>80</sup> *Theol. 1*, 69.18–24.

material bodies, underlying the role of rational choice (*prohairesis*) operating beyond nature.<sup>81</sup>

In another theological text,<sup>82</sup> when dealing with the question of the possibility of increasing virtue, Psellos ascribes this possibility, in contrast to the “Greeks”, only to rational choice which moves man’s self and regulates his inherent duality. Then, Psellos adds that praising virtue leads to its increase, as praising philosophy leads men to demonstrate and speculate more. And he concludes, inspired apparently by Plutarch’s *Life of Dion* 13.4 and *On friends and flatterers* 52D, by reminding us with irony, how Plato’s arrival in Sicily had for a while “transformed” all tyrants into aspiring geometers and philosophers.

A central topic of Psellos’ theological queries is Man’s representation of the Divine.<sup>83</sup> Plutarch’s theoretical distinction between atheism and superstition is adopted by Psellos in the opusculum 14,<sup>84</sup> drawn from the *On superstition* 164E. In another theological exegesis, Psellos refutes the thesis that God could be corporeal, following Gregorios of Nazianzus. After having rejected the Epicurean theory of the atoms, he points out that “false judgement about God is worse than total ignorance of him”. And he adds that “for this reason Plutarch considers that atheism is less impious than superstition because the atheist denies God’s supremacy over all, while the superstitious considers it as evil, holding Him responsible for men’s suffering”.<sup>85</sup>

In opusculum 62, Psellos explores the question of “whether Man is a portion of God”. Wondering how Man, composed of body and soul, can be considered as a fragment of God, Psellos rejects with repugnance the Stoic doctrine, reported in pseudo-Plutarch’s *Doctrines of the philosophers* 879C, according to which God is a “subtle body” called “warm spirit” (*enthermon pneuma*) from which every other body is composed, being more or less subtle depending on its proximity to Him.

II. In *Theologica* 2 we detect only two echoes of Plutarch. The first is a simple phrase concerning the size of sun, drawn from the *On the obsolescence of oracles* 410E.<sup>86</sup> The second is located in a passage concerning pastoral virtue as

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* 69.76–83 and *Plac. philos.* 884F along with *De omn. doctr.* section 105.

<sup>82</sup> *Theol.* 1, 98.85–92.

<sup>83</sup> See *De omn. doctr.* section 19 (“Whence did men obtain the knowledge of the existence and essence of God”). Even though Psellos reproduces in lines 3–8 an echo of Plutarch’s *Plac. philos.* 879C, he frames it with the Christian conception of Providence inherent in the intelligible construction and the harmonious movement of the whole Creation.

<sup>84</sup> *Theol.* 1, 14.23–27.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* 49.214–217 and Plutarch’s *De sup.* 165B–C.

<sup>86</sup> *Theol.* 2, 3.143–145.

likeness to God and medium between Him and men. Addressing his disciples, Psellos points out the following:

Gregory of Nazianzus attacks imperceptibly the philosophers who declare that virtue is natural and not acquired by spiritual exercise. Plotinos [I, 4.8.18–22] and after him Porphyrius bear witness against them too. Plato as well, the great Philosopher, says that God stands in the middle of the world, being a model for others. I suppose that you have already read it in Plutarch, for surely without delving into Plato [*Crit.* 121c2–4].<sup>87</sup>

In this instance, the Byzantine Philosopher obviously referred to Plutarch's *On god's slowness to punish* 550C–E.<sup>88</sup> From the same passage of Plutarch, in another exegesis of his *Theologica* 1,<sup>89</sup> Psellos uses a short extract in a context on the necessity of alertness of the soul towards "the obscure, inappropriate and misleading passions".

Last but not least, Plutarch's impact on Psellos also concerned religion, and, more specifically, the understanding of religious experience based on the philosophical interpretation of rituals and miracles, different levels of divination and prophecy, visions and dreams, as well as demonology. As a reaction to Stoicism, Plutarch marks a return to the Orphico-Pythagorean Platonism. At the crossroads of mystery cult and philosophical rationalism, the Plutarchan legacy of religious initiations reaches Psellos indirectly and more or less transformed through the mediation of Iamblichos (*On the mysteries*), Synesios (*On dreams*) and later neoplatonists, such as Proklos.

Revolving around the conceptual complexity of the doctrine of *pneuma*<sup>90</sup> (called also *phantastikon/psychic pneuma* – imaginative spirit), most of the above mentioned topics appear also in Psellos' texts. The Byzantine philosopher aspires towards a conciliation of religious practices or beliefs and reason by bringing to light the psychological origins of the different modes of contact with God and His manifestations.<sup>91</sup> Significant echoes from Plutarch's *Lives* of

<sup>87</sup> *Theol.* 2, 6.49–57.

<sup>88</sup> According to Betz (1975: 194–6), this passage is a summary of Plato's theology as Plutarch understood it and includes his conception of divine revelation and the possibility of imitating God as a divine gift, following the platonic *Phaedrus* 247a and the *Laws* 727a, 848d.

<sup>89</sup> *Theol.* 1, 101.54–55.

<sup>90</sup> See Plutarch *De def. or.* 431C, 432D, 436E–F and 438A–C.

<sup>91</sup> As Liefferinge (1998) points out, based on relevant passages, Plutarch was in this field the forerunner of Iamblichos. See also in Ildefonse (2006: 431–447) the Appendix 2 devoted to the notion of *pneuma* in Plutarch. For Psellos' conception of *pneuma phantastikon* in relation to religious experiences, see in Delli (2011: 411–435) the chapter devoted to the role of

*Camillus* and of *Coriolanus*, found in Psellos' *Discourse on the miracle that occurred in the Blachernai Church*, indicate their common intellectual moderation in approaching the miraculous manifestations of the Divine in material reality, avoiding both superstition and disdain of God by reflective devoutness towards the Divine.<sup>92</sup>

## 5 Rhetorical Works and Letters

Psellos' rhetorical texts and letters abound with quotations and echoes coming from Plutarch.<sup>93</sup> In this field, Psellos<sup>94</sup> puts his polymathy in the service of persuasion following Synesios' view (*Dion* 4.29–31), according to which “the prelude to philosophy is nothing else than an all-embracing curiosity about knowledge”. Psellos selectively draws on the *Parallel lives* for useful literary expressions and comparisons, arguments and moral lessons, anecdotal narratives and antiquarian data of encyclopaedic interest. Inspired by the *Lives*, the Byzantine scholar establishes connections and analogies between incidents or eminent persons of the past and contemporary circumstances or protagonists of his personal and public life.

Psellos' preference is clearly for the Greek historical figures of the *Lives*. In his *Funeral oration for the Most Holy Patriarch Kyr Constantine Leichoudes*, Psellos ascribes the proverbial justice of Aristides (*Arist.* 6.1) to his dead friend whom he considers superior to Pericles' rhetorical efficacy (*Per.* 7.1).<sup>95</sup> In a letter addressed to the Emperor he refers to the genius of Pericles, “born with a long head and out of due proportion” (*Per.* 3.2). Pericles' deformity is mentioned by Psellos together with other external particularities of eminent

the *pneuma* linked to the *phantasia* in the context of the *theagogy* of the soul (*Theologica* 1 and *Orationes hagiographicae*).

92 Cf. *Orat. hagiogr.* 4.667–669 with Plutarch's *Camillus* 6 (especially 6.4–6) and *Coriolanus* 38 (in particular 38.1–4). On *Camillus* 6 and *Coriolanus* 38, see Meeusen (2017: 92–95).

93 Given the limits of this chapter and being aware of the richness of this material, which requires a detailed study, we will limit ourselves to some general remarks about the way Psellos uses the *Parallel lives* in his literary texts through a few examples, and to an indicative overview of the philosophical ideas and images drawn from the *Moralia*.

94 See for instance: *Orat. paneg.* 2.668 and pseudo-Plutarch *De fluviiis* 7.1.3; *Orat. fun.* 2.16.1–2 and *De musica* 1146D; *Encomio* line 390 and *De musica* 1136B; *Orat. min.* 37.167 and *De musica* 1133A; *Orat. min.* 24.52–54 and *Plac. philos.* 896C–F, 896F–897A; *Orat. min.* 37.368–371 and *Chronographia* 7.4.6 with *Plac. philos.* 887B–C and Plato's *Timaeus* (55a2–56b6); *Orat. pan.* 6.268 and *Plac. philos.* 876D.

95 *Orat. fun.* 1, 2.4.3–8. On *Aristides* in Psellos, see also *Orat. forenses et acta* 3.10–20 in parallel with Plutarch's *Aristides* 25.9.

personalities such as Plato, Aristotle, and Alexander. And he concludes by saying that “external beauty could hide inner deficiency, while the inner beauty could be veiled by ungracious appearances”.<sup>96</sup> A brief quotation drawn from Plutarch's *Alcibiades* is found in Psellos' oration entitled *To his own secretary*. In this context, he criticises his contemporary politicians for their fixation on external appearances, contrasting them to the ancient Greeks whom he praises for their indifference to superficial looks.<sup>97</sup>

Psellos is also inspired by the *Lives* of Roman figures, but he draws from them less and names them rarely. One notable exception is Cato the Elder, with whom Psellos compares himself. In his oration entitled *To the slanderer who dropped a defaming leaflet*, Psellos produces a sarcastic invective against his accuser and a detailed defence of himself. Insisting on the value of mixing austerity with charm, he praises Plutarch “because he does not show Cato to be entirely rough and austere, but he reports also some of his charm without being ashamed to ascribe discursive sweetness to a philosopher”.<sup>98</sup> Cato is mentioned once more in his *Discourse to the Emperor*. In this instance, the Byzantine philosopher mentions Cato together with the Emperor, praising both for “pursuing justice not in terms of the ordinary laws but according to the standards of the platonic *Republic*”.<sup>99</sup>

11. The *Moralia* is an inexhaustible source of inspiration for Psellos. The plethoric temperament of Plutarch stimulates Psellos' all-embracing philosophical curiosity and inclination to communicate its outcome to others – disciples, friends, colleagues, rivals and even enemies. The Byzantine scholar gleans from *Moralia* philosophical ideas, didactic stories and instructive symbols.

Despite the plurality of quotations borrowed from the *Moralia*, Plutarch's influence as detected in Psellos' rhetorical texts and letters seems to be centred on three main thematic groups. The first contains anthropological topics such as the conceptions on the twofold nature of Man as a “novel mixture of discordant components”<sup>100</sup> and on his inherent “mutability”,<sup>101</sup> which recall similar passages of the *Against Colotes* (1119A–C) and *On moral virtue* (441D). In the *Encomium for his mother* and in a context of his mother's ascetic and rather pessimistic attitude towards the body, Psellos mentions the idea of the

<sup>96</sup> *Scripta minora* 2, letter 233, pp. 281.17–282.3. In this extract Psellos mentions Aristotle's lisp, Plato's stoop and King Alexander's twisted neck as well, drawing from Plutarch's *De ad. et am.* (53C).

<sup>97</sup> *Orat. min.* 17.39–40 and *Alcibiades* 23.3.

<sup>98</sup> *Orat. min.* 7.138–143 and *Cato Maior* 7.1.

<sup>99</sup> *Orat. pan.* 2.208–210 and *Cato Maior* 2. 3.

<sup>100</sup> *Epistola a Michele Cerulario* lines 32–34 and *Plac. philos.* 882C and 1119A.

<sup>101</sup> *Orat. fun.* 1, 1.52.22–27.

body as “imprisonment” (*desmos*)<sup>102</sup> of the soul, echoing the dualistic view of the Plutarchan *On god's slowness to punish* (554D).<sup>103</sup> In the same text, Psellos says that the superior part of his mother's soul which was not mixed with sensation was suspended as a “light cork” without being dragged down to the nets of materiality.<sup>104</sup> The image of the “cork” is probably borrowed from the *Advice on health* 127C–D, although Plutarch uses it in a totally different context related to the body and not to the soul.

The second thematic group includes philosophical images of the field of education<sup>105</sup> and practical ethics. In the beginning of his oration addressed to his disciples (*To the disciples abandoning the exegesis of the On the interpretation*), Psellos mentions that the “bridle” of education can guide the rebel in the right way,<sup>106</sup> echoing a passage of Plutarch's *On reading the poets* (39B). Another trace of [Plutarch]'s *On the education of children* 3A–B and *Spartan sayings* 225F–226B can be found in the story of the two puppies of the same litter, which, having received a different upbringing by the lawgiver of the Spartans, Lycurgus, they become totally different.<sup>107</sup> The “waxen tablet” image of the soul whose malleability<sup>108</sup> is increased by education, rendering man more receptive to learning and sciences, is another topic resonant of the *On the education of children* 3E–F. In his *Monody devoted to Romanos*, Psellos refers to progress in knowledge as gradual initiation to mysteries, using some terms<sup>109</sup> drawn from the *On the obsolescence of oracles* 420C. Psellos' oration *On friendship to the nephews of the Patriarch Kyr Michael Kerouarios* is mainly inspired by Plutarch's *On brotherly love*. Psellos transforms the family ethic of Hellenistic families to a friendship ethic within the Byzantine family. In this

<sup>102</sup> *Encomio*, lines 1024–1031, especially 1025.

<sup>103</sup> This idea is ascribed to Plutarch's interpretation of Homer in Stobaios' *Anthologion* 1.41.10. This conception of body has Orphico-Pythagorean origins. See also Stobaios, *ibid.* 1.40. See also Curnis in this volume.

<sup>104</sup> *Encomio* lines 1073–1077. See also *Chronographia* 6.197.23–26.

<sup>105</sup> See also in *Encomio*, lines 672–673 another echo of *On the education of children* 2D.

<sup>106</sup> *Orat. min.* 23.8–9.

<sup>107</sup> *Orat. min.* 18.6–8.

<sup>108</sup> *Orat. min.* 7.152–155. The wax tablet image of the soul comes back to the Platonic *Theatetus* 191c8–11 and 194c4–d7 and it occurs in many texts of Psellos linked to the “malleability” of human soul (for instance *Orat. min.* 37.125–26; *Orat. for. act.* 3.205–25 and *Orat. pan.* 1.126–29). These themes are related to another topic, that of the “embodied statues” (*agalmata*). The “embodied statue” is a metaphor for the ideal “human-making” and self-fashioning. For an excellent and exhaustive study of this theme in Psellos, see Papaioannou (2013: 179–191). On the image of “statue” connected to the self-fashioning by virtue, see relevant echoes in Plutarch's *Lysander* (5.5) and *To an uneducated ruler* (780F).

<sup>109</sup> *Or. fun.* 1, 9.3.10–11.

instance, he mentions also the “Siamese twins of Molione” as a moral lesson from nature and a symbol of the solid union between brothers.<sup>110</sup>

The third group includes some peripheral topics about the natural world and physiology. In the *Encomium for the flea*,<sup>111</sup> Psellos explains that the flea finishes its life with man’s death by losing its source of food and it dies where it was born, on man’s head.<sup>112</sup> Psellos borrows this quotation from Plutarch’s *On friends and flatterers* 49C, which compares the fleas to the flatterer. In a similar text entitled *Encomium for the bugs*, Psellos likens the natural sympathy between man and bugs to that of a small bird called *trochilos* and the crocodile.<sup>113</sup> The second part of the comparison is inspired by Plutarch’s *On the intelligence of animals* 980D. Finally, in *Actum 4 (Chrysobull)*,<sup>114</sup> the Byzantine writer connects the *psychic pneuma*<sup>115</sup> with the intense emotion, inspired by Plutarch’s *Against the Stoicks on common conceptions* (1084D–E) and mostly by Synesios’ *On dreams* (7. 17–20 and 10. 31).

## 6 Conclusion

The evaluation of Plutarch’s influence on Psellos would be insufficient if simply reduced to the indication of textual instances and quotations. It is deeper and wider, running through all facets of Psellos’ rhetorical, philosophical, historical and biographical work. *Chronographia*, Psellos’ historical masterpiece, probably relies in part on Plutarch’s *Parallel lives*, in its conception of History as originating from within man rather than from external circumstances (see

<sup>110</sup> See *Orat. min.* 31. 71–74 with *De frat. am.* 478C–D and *De comm. not.* 1083C. Cf. also *ibid.* lines 37–64 with *De frat. am.* 478E, lines 173–181 with *De frat. am.* 485E–F and lines 214–215 with *De frat. am.* 492E.

<sup>111</sup> It is a paradoxical and satirical genre of rhetorical orations including classical references and quotations, departed from Lucian, bringing philosophical and ethic doctrines into animal life. As Psellos says, in line 15, following Plutarch (*On monarchy, democracy, and oligarchy* 826D), “we marvel rather at rare things than at ordinary ones”.

<sup>112</sup> *Orat. min.* 28.116–118.

<sup>113</sup> *Orat. min.* 29.59–61.

<sup>114</sup> *Orat. for. et acta* 7.8–11.

<sup>115</sup> Psellos describes the stimulation of the whole *psychic pneuma* amazed by the majesty of the sun and he likens this experience to the astonishment caused in view of the Emperor’s greatness. The *psychic pneuma*, holding a middle position between body and soul, serves sensory and motor functions in higher psychological and mental activities of the brain, such as imagination and emotions.

Reinsch in this volume).<sup>116</sup> If the Neoplatonic doctrinal equipment remains at the heart of Psellos' thought promoting the *middleness* as the ideal of human life, the "Great Platonic Natures",<sup>117</sup> drawn upon the *Lives* of Plutarch, inspires him in elaborating his own narrative for the leading figures of his time, with a remarkable psychological acuity exceeding the idealised models provided by the Byzantine *Mirrors of statesmen*.

The common denominator that can make accessible and meaningful this multifaceted panorama of influences of Plutarch on Psellos is perhaps found in the subtle prominence given by both to the "worldly" realm of human life, grounded in the selective use and the creative assimilation of Platonism. The "worldly" in Psellos takes the form of openness towards rationality and scientific knowledge, educated imagination and sensibility, commitment or emotional ties to others along with active involvement in public life and providential care of the world; formative *intermediaries*, essential to philosophical life, making "humanisation" an indispensable condition for divinisation.<sup>118</sup> Hence, Plutarch proves to be more than a venerable relic of the literary past; he is rather a precious instrument in the laboratory of Psellos' thought.

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<sup>116</sup> As Ljubarskij (2004: 193 and 279) indicates, Psellos was probably been inspired by Plutarch and Polybius, concerning his ideas on human inconstancy, as well as in the way he treats historical issues employing rhetorical modalities.

<sup>117</sup> Duff (1999).

<sup>118</sup> For the Neoplatonic origin of this conception, see O'Meara (2011).

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## Plutarch in Michael Psellos' *Chronographia*

*Diether Roderich Reinsch*

Michael Psellos was born as Konstantinos (Michael became his religious name) in Constantinople in 1018. In this period, under the Emperor Basileios II and his predecessors in the tenth century, after a rather problematic period of a century and a half, the Byzantine Empire had come to new prosperity, politically, militarily, economically and culturally. He lived on until around the year 1076, when the Empire underwent a very critical phase, threatened from outside by the Seljuks in the East and the Normans in the West and, on the domestic front, by political instability and revolts. Only after Psellos' death did the successful coup of Alexios Komnenos (1081–1118) open a new time of prosperity. In Psellos' interpretation the time after the reign of Basileios II was characterised by ongoing imperial prodigalities (for instance lavish building programs and appointments) and negligent disregard for the army.

Young Konstantinos was the offspring of a middle class family. He received a very good education, especially in rhetoric and philosophy, and had a stellar career in the imperial civil service as secretary, advisor, speechwriter, orator, ambassador and the prince's educator. Between about 1040 and 1076 he was in service at court in close proximity to 11 Emperors and Empresses. The monastic vows which he took in 1054 for political reasons removed him only for a short time from Constantinople and did not prevent him from coming back very soon to continue his role at the imperial court. How important his status at court really was is not easy to grasp, because our knowledge is based nearly entirely on Psellos himself.

However, this was only one facet of his personality. Psellos was also a private teacher in higher education (philosophy and rhetoric) and a scholar with wide-ranging interests in philosophy, theology, grammar and rhetoric, military science, jurisprudence, medicine, astronomy and much more. Above all he was a prolific writer in all these fields, not to mention his many orations, historiographic works and his corpus of letters, from which more than 500 have come down to us, altogether some 1,100 titles, preserved in over 1,500 medieval manuscripts.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Moore (2005).

His best-known work is perhaps the so-called *Chronographia* (the title is not genuine), where he deals with the lives of all the Byzantine Emperors from Basileios II to Michael VII Doukas.<sup>2</sup> It is not a simple biographical work following its protagonists from cradle to grave, but a very complex work of literature with many elements of autobiography and a strong apologetic interest regarding Psellos' own political role and his philosophical positions.<sup>3</sup> In this historical work the author is omnipresent, often criticising his protagonists (often with veiled irony) and providing his views on political and social developments and philosophical problems.

There is no question that Psellos received Plutarch widely. He himself emphasises particularly that, in addition to Demosthenes, Isocrates, Aristides, Thucydides and Plato, Plutarch with all his writings was one of his "Muses" (Boissonade 1838: 50.14–15). Following the rules of rhetoric Psellos generally does not quote Plutarch as a source by name, but he does so once, in his apology against an unnamed detractor (Littlewood 1985: *Orat.* 7.138–143): "The famous Cato was generally a very just man by nature, but as to his character (*ēthos*) he was hard to deal with (*dysxymbolos*) and therefore in disharmony with society. In defending him Plutarch of Chaeronea points out that the man was not entirely awkward and fierce, but bears witness to some charms (*charitas*) [sc. that he possessed] and does not hesitate to ascribe to a philosopher sweetness in his words (*en tois logois glykytēta*).<sup>4</sup>

In the other places where Psellos quotes the name "Plutarch", he is not referring to Plutarch of Chaeronea, but to Plutarch of Athens, the Neoplatonic philosopher of the fourth or fifth century. It is not surprising that Plutarch the philosopher is quoted several times in Psellos' philosophical and theological works, whereas Plutarch of Chaeronea is quoted in the rhetorical works by name only once, but according to the rules of rhetoric he is present without being referred to expressly in many places.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Last edition Reinsch (2014).

<sup>3</sup> See Pietsch (2005).

<sup>4</sup> The reference is not, as Littlewood has it in his apparatus, to *Ca. Ma.* 7.1, but to *Phoc.* 3.1 (so rightly Pade [2007]: 56): "he (Cato) did not have a winning character which would have been kindly affected to common people (*oude prospholes ochlō to ēthos*)", in combination with *Ca. Mi.* 5.3 "but also charm attracting the audience was spread over the roughness of the thoughts, and he presented his character which mixed the majestic with some pleasure and smile as not inhuman") and *Phoc.* 5.1, where we read "as to his character (*ēthos*) he was very gentle and humane, but from his face he seemed to be hard to deal with (*dysxymbolos*) and of angry countenance". (My own translation)

<sup>5</sup> In Gautier (1989): *Opusc.* 49.214–217 "therefore the philosopher Plutarch considers godlessness (*atheia*) as more godless than superstitious fears (*deisidaimonia*)", Psellos does not refer to Plutarch, *De sup.* 165C, as is maintained by Gautier. In this passage *atheia* is not considered

The relation between Psellos' *Chronographia* and Plutarch, however, is not primarily a matter of quotations or references (we will come to them later), but of affinity of concepts. It is no surprise that the *Chronographia* represents a type of historiography which goes back to Hellenistic and late antique times. This has to do with the general development of Byzantine historiography, which led to a new beginning in the tenth century.<sup>6</sup> The time of the world chronicle and, with it, of historiography written from the viewpoint of salvation history came to an end. Some world chronicles were still being written, but in the course of the tenth century biographically orientated works appeared, which did not treat the whole world history anymore, but only the reign of one or several Emperors. The single books of the so-called *Theophanes continuatus* (see Németh in this volume) and Joseph Genesios and the work of Leo the Deacon are such works. This sort of historiography is continued by Michael Psellos in his *Chronographia*.<sup>7</sup> His contemporaries, too, apparently saw it like this. One of them composed a corpus of Byzantine history, which came down to us in the unique manuscript containing the complete *Chronographia*, uniting the chronicle of Ps.-Symeon, the history of Leo the Deacon and the *Chronographia* of Michael Psellos.

Before we take a closer look at the affinities between Plutarch's *Lives* and Psellos' *Chronographia* it is necessary to underline their main differences. Plutarch was writing from a purely ethical point of view and he dealt with personalities of mostly long bygone centuries, on which he concentrated almost exclusively, whereas Psellos is writing about contemporary or (in the case of Basileios II) nearly contemporary Emperors and persons who surrounded or opposed them, whom he characterised as deuteragonists on the political scene. He himself did not play an unimportant role in this scenario, which he describes and comments on extensively. Psellos' point of view is ethical, too, but much more concentrated on the political facet of ethics. The Plutarchan concept of double lives, of course, did not make sense to Psellos. It is not very likely, but we do not know for sure, that he had more lives at his disposal than those which have come down to us. Nevertheless in *Chronographia* 6.163.1–5, where Psellos names six “Emperors” (Alexander the Great, the “two Caesars” [*dittō Kaisare*], Pyrrhus, Epaminondas of Thebes, and Agesilaus of Sparta), who

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worse than *deisidaimonia*, but both are equally bad extremes missing the middle, that is piety (*eusebeia*). From several other places of *De sup.* it is clear that Plutarch by contrast rated *deisidaimonia* as even worse than *atheīa*.

<sup>6</sup> Some features of this new beginning can be traced already in the 7th century in the work of Theophylact Simocatta, see Taragna (2000: 185–204).

<sup>7</sup> See Ljubarskij (2004: 287).

“received extensive positive biographical appraisal of their thoughts, words and deeds” (*tous hymnoumenous ekeinous en gnōmais kai logois kai praxesin*), all six had been treated by Plutarch, with only the *Life of Epaminondas* having been lost from the *Parallel lives*, and the *Life of Octavian* having been lost from the series of single lives of Roman emperors.

## 1        *Ēthos* in Plutarch's *Lives*

A main concern common to both Plutarch and Psellos is the character (*ēthos*) of the persons they deal with, and both authors often characterise the *ēthos* of a person by positive or negative attributes. So for Plutarch Numa has a good mixture as to his *ēthos* and he tries to soften the intemperate and fiery character of the citizens (*Num.* 3.7), whereas Lycurgus tries to shield Sparta from the wicked characters of foreigners (*Lyc.* 27.9). To Pericles Plutarch attests a kindly character (*Per.* 39.2). Like Numa also Aemilius Paulus had a good mixture of character, he was better tempered than anybody else (*Aem.* 22.6). When Philopoemen went to Crete, he took over the (bad) Cretan character (*Phil.* 13.9). Cato the Elder had a civilised and charming character (*Ca. Ma.* 3.3), whereas Marius is characterised as sour and bitter (*Mar.* 2.1). Pompeius' character was majestic and royal (*Pomp.* 2.1), Cato the Younger's unchangeable and free from emotions (*Ca. Mi.* 1.3), Phocion was extremely gentle and courteous (*Phoc.* 5.1).

Character is given to human beings by nature, but it may be changed by external circumstances. This is the case with Alcibiades: “His character”, says Plutarch (*Alc.* 2.1), “as it is quite likely in great difficulties and manifold fates, later showed inconsistencies and changes.” Plutarch is convinced, as he affirms (*Sert.* 10.6), that real virtue which is based on reason cannot be reversed by fate, but even good natures, if they suffer unjustly from great misfortunes, may change their characters because of the fate caused by an evil spirit. This in his opinion was experienced by Sertorius; the evil circumstances made him more severe with people who did wrong. With regard to normal people Plutarch holds (*Phoc.* 2.2) that misfortunes generally make characters bitter, vexed at trifles and dangerously prone to outbreaks of wrath. Due to his general educational concept Plutarch's main interest is focused on how character can be influenced for the better and he gives a clear answer: by education, social contact and philosophy. So he says about Numa (*Num.* 3.7) that, as to his character, he had been given by nature a good mixture of every kind of virtue, and he himself made it even more human through education (*paideia*), endurance, and philosophy. Porcia is referred to as having said to Brutus (*Brut.* 13.9): “There

is, o Brutus, some power being exercised over character by good rearing and the right social interaction". Words can influence character also for worse, as in the case of Alexander. After he had killed Clitus, Alexander is admonished by Anaxarchus not to care about justice, because every action of a king is well done and just. By these words, according to Plutarch (*Alex.* 52.7), Anaxarchus made Alexander's character more frivolous and more violent.

A main feature of style in Plutarch's *Lives* is the large amount of apophthegmata attributed to his heroes. Sometimes, as in *Cato the Elder* 7–9, we have a whole cluster of such apophthegmata, without any connecting narrative elements. In Plutarch's view it is much more by men's words than by their faces (so some people believe) that their character manifests itself (*Ca. Ma.* 7.3). Generally, for Plutarch the small signs are more revealing of a person's character than the great deeds.

## 2        *Ēthos in Psellos' Chronographia*

For Psellos in his presentation of the Emperors and many of the minor figures *ēthos* is of similar importance as for Plutarch. In Psellos, too, it means "character".<sup>8</sup> Only in a few places does the meaning slightly change to "behaviour, conduct".<sup>9</sup> Psellos gives, like Plutarch, direct characterisations by means of positive or negative attributes. All the Emperors and Empresses (Zoe, Theodora, Eudokia Makrembolitissa) except the rather ephemeral Michael v and Michael vi Stratiotikos are given direct qualifications of their character. The same goes for 14 other persons including the uncle Ioannes, the son Konstantinos and the brother Andronikos of Michael VII Doukas and for Psellos himself; he mentions (7.28.3) that he, according to his *ēthos*, did not flinch from danger, when he had to plead the case of the reigning Emperor in the usurper's Isaak Komnenos tent. The spectrum of direct characterisations ranges from very positive to negative notions: despite his lack in classical education, as to his *ēthos* Romanos III was well balanced (4.7.6: *errhythmisto*

<sup>8</sup> Lauritzen (2013: 47–50) is dealing with *ēthos* in the *Chronographia* translating it as "manner". For the links between the *Chronographia* and Plutarch's *Lives*, see especially Lauritzen (2013: 187–191). A good analysis of "character" in the *Chronographia* is given by Kaldellis (1999: 23–25).

<sup>9</sup> So in *Chronogr.* 1.34.1–3: "He (i.e. Basileios II) split up his *ēthos* and adapted it to times of war and to peaceful circumstances". 1.34.12–13: "He did not change his *ēthos* with people towards whom he was well-disposed, unless there was an absolute necessity". In all other cases, I think, "character" is the best equivalent.

*de to ēthos*). The same is said about Konstantinos IX Monomachos (6.126.16: *errhythmisto de kai pros emmeles ēthos*); he displays modesty, in accordance with his character (6.88.8). Skleraina, his mistress, possessed a character which was able to bewitch even stones (6.60.3–4). On the other side stood the empresses Zoe and Theodora; despite the differences between them as to their character and behaviour described in 6.4–5, Psellos attests to both of them frivolity (6.49.2).

For Psellos as for Plutarch character is innate. It is said of Ioannes Parakoinomenos that he tried to behave more magnificently and majestically, but he was hindered by his innate character (4.13.12). But as for Plutarch, for Psellos, too, this *ēthos* is changeable from outside, especially as a result of external events; thus the Emperor Isaak Komnenos added to his innate character even more harshness after his army had suffered serious losses due to bad weather (7.71.2–3). Unlike Plutarch, however, Psellos' focus is not on education, philosophy or music as factors that could influence character to change it for the better. His main target is not to educate, but to explain political behaviour. Nouns and verbs with the meaning "change" are used to indicate the shift in character. Only once in the *Chronographia* is such a change indicating a more positive behaviour: the barbarian eunuchs of Konstantinos VIII are said to have got *paideia* from him and therefore they underwent a change into his character (2.3.9). Isaak's character had changed to more harshness, as we have seen. After this change the Emperor treats his brother like any other of his subjects. His brother has to descend from his horse even when in great distance from the palace, but he accepts this change in the character of his brother with equanimity (7.71.7–8). At the end of the paragraph Psellos once again underlines the change Isaak has undergone (7.72.2). An even more radical change in character affected the emperors Basileios II and Romanos III. In the case of Basileios Psellos explicitly says that the external circumstances, as it were, constricted his character (1.4.6–7). According to his own account, Psellos learned from his sources that the rebellions of Bardas Skleros and Bardas Phokas had changed Basileios' character to a more earnest one. In the case of Romanos III it was his fatal illness that changed his character from sweet (3.24.9) to harsh (3.24.6).

In Psellos' *Chronographia* we find the same concept of character as in Plutarch's *Lives*, but according to the different aims of their writings Plutarch prefers the presentation of virtuous characters encouraging imitation, whereas Psellos is more interested in the inconsistencies caused by external events. Plutarch is more abstract in his targets, whereas Psellos has to deal with persons and historic events he, in most cases, is personally involved in.

### 3 How to Deal with the Negative Traits of the Persons Described?

But what to do with negative aspects of the people one is writing about? What to do with deeds not being in accordance with a positive character? Plutarch makes some general statements to this in the precursory remarks to *Cimon* 2.2; he feels himself obliged to tell the truth in case of Cimon, as in all similar cases, because it is very difficult, if not impossible, to present a man's life without any blame. But if the hero has done something wrong out of passion or while in a difficult political position, the biographer should not take pleasure in presenting this lack of virtue, but, as it were, feel ashamed of the weakness of human nature.

For Psellos the problem arises particularly in dealing with the Emperor Konstantinos IX Monomachos, to whom more than a quarter of the whole *Chronographia* is dedicated. In a long digression (6.22–28) he discusses the special difficulties concerning the presentation of Konstantinos. To him Psellos owes a huge debt of gratitude, because Konstantinos had promoted him to high positions and had made him his confidential advisor. As to the readers, they knew all of Psellos' many panegyric orations in honour of Konstantinos, of course not containing any negative aspects. If, in such an oration, he had omitted the positive deeds and concentrated on the negative, he would have been rightly considered a very evil character, similar to Herodotus who accumulated in his *Histories* all the evil of the Greeks. Here Psellos clearly draws on Plutarch: in his work *On the malice of Herodotus* he had repeatedly attributed to Herodotus a bad character, using the adjective *kakoēthēs* and the noun *kakoētheia* to describe him. The general reasoning in Psellos is the same as in Plutarch: an Emperor cannot be perfect. Perhaps a private person could, based on the nature of his soul, attain lifelong virtue, for an emperor this would be impossible (6.27.6–12). Because there is no exception from this rule, Psellos as an historian must not conceal the negative elements in Konstantinos' career. He will do this, he says (6.28.6), undisguisedly and truthfully, but (as we can verify, in accordance with the Plutarchan claim) in moderation.

### 4 Historiographical Concepts

The coincidences between Plutarch's *Lives* and Psellos' *Chronographia* go even deeper; they pertain to the very core of historiographical concepts. Plutarch, in his prologue to *Alexander*, apologises to his readers for not presenting all important events, but cutting most of them (*Alex.* 1.1). His justification for that

is twofold: firstly, he says, he is “not going to write histories (*historias*) but lives (*bious*)”, and, secondly, “*ēthos*, virtue and vice do not come to light primarily through the most spectacular deeds, battles with great loss of life or sieges of towns, but often through a little gesture, a saying, something not very earnest.”<sup>10</sup> In the same vein he announces in the prologue to *Nicias* (1.5) that he will not treat in detail the great deeds recorded by Thucydides and Philistus, but concentrate on smaller sources, because he is not willing “to collect useless history”, but wishes to hand down what is useful for the recognition of character and habit. Similar declarations are made in the prologue to *Galba* (2.5).

Psellos is following the same principles, in practice and in theory. In his chapter on methodology (6.73) he expressly dissociates himself from depicting details of wars and campaigns, he does not follow Thucydides in dividing his presentation of history following the seasons of the year. He only exceptionally describes events which are normally treated in detail by historians, for instance, in some length the campaign of the troops of Emperor Michael VI against Isaak Komnenos and the battle won by Isaak (7.11–13). He is much more interested in things called *paidia* (amusement, game) by Plutarch, so, for instance, in the erotic adventures of Zoe, Konstantinos Monomachos and other persons, in the athletic performances of Emperor Konstantinos VIII or the leisure activities of the Empresses Zoe (manufacture of perfumes) and Theodora (counting her gold coins). Psellos claims in many places that what he is doing is history, not panegyric, but his history is concentrated on the lives of the Emperors (6.25.2). A very striking characteristic of his “history” is the absence of long speeches. Like Plutarch he uses a great number of apophthegmata to reveal the character of his heroes. The most striking example we find in 7.121 (a 29), where at the end of the Life of Konstantinos X Doukas Psellos gives us a cluster of his sayings after a lapidary introductory sentence: “After we have spoken in a sufficient way about what he has done, let us now say what he let drop during his reign.” About young Konstantinos, the little son of Michael VII, he writes down neither “words” (*logous*) nor deeds, because at that time he was still a baby and had not yet been able to do or utter anything (7.176 [c 12].3–4).

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<sup>10</sup> For this and other methodological statements of Plutarch in his *Lives*, see Hägg (2012: 268–271).

## 5 Passages where Psellos Directly Refers to Plutarch

At a number of places in the *Chronographia* Psellos is referring back to specific passages of Plutarch, not exclusively of his *Lives*.<sup>11</sup> Nowhere in the *Chronographia* is Plutarch cited by name, but he is present in quotations at different levels. Psellos often refers to the conduct of persons described by Plutarch with or without naming them. About Basileios II and his harsh behaviour which was averse to every kind of luxury Psellos says (1.31.18–20): “when he took on the purple, it was not the extremely bright but the dark one”. This is a clear echo of *Cato the Younger* 6.5 where Plutarch says about Cato: “because he saw in vogue the light red and bright purple, he wore the dark one”. *Cato the Younger* and *Phocion* are two of Psellos’ favourite *Lives* (see also Delli in this volume). In 1.36.2 in his description of Basileios II once again he refers to *Phocion*. There (6.2) speaking about the general Chabrias and his passionate fighting spirit, Plutarch uses the combination “he was ardent by wrath (*diapyroutō tō thymō*)”. According to the TLG the only other author in Greek literature who used a form of the verb *diapyroumai* together with *tō thymō* is Psellos. He did it twice, once in 1.36.2: Basileios II had the habit to twirl his beard, especially when “he was ardent by wrath (*hopote tō thymō diapyroumenos ēn*)”. The other time (in 6.81.9–10) he describes the reaction of the rebel Georgios Maniakes, when the ambassador who was sent by the emperor lavished vituperations on him: “he is ardent by wrath (*diapyroutai tō thymō*)”.

It seems that Psellos knew his Plutarch or his favourite works of Plutarch very well, so that some exceptional expressions came to his memory. This is obviously also the case in 6.40.6–7. Psellos says that from all the scientific branches it is possible to single out one as “beloved hearth” (*hestian philēn*), then to visit all the other branches and to come back to the first. The combination *hestia* + *philē* is found only twice in Greek. Once in the *Life of St Thecla* of Ps.-Basileios of Seleukia<sup>12</sup> 1.27.16, where Thecla calls the house, where she had been advised by Saint Paul, “my beloved and salutary hearth” (*tēn emoi philēn kai sōtērion hestian*). It is not very likely that Psellos took the expression from here, but rather from *Phocion* 37.5, where Phocion’s wife, when saving the bones of her dead husband from the funeral pyre, exclaims: “to your care,

<sup>11</sup> The subject has not hitherto been treated extensively. In articles or books treating Plutarch’s *Nachleben* we mostly find some general remarks on such passages, in secondary literature on Psellos in more detail, but with problematic interpretations of textual passages, in Lauritzen (2013: 186–191).

<sup>12</sup> Dagron (1978: 276).

beloved hearth, I am committing these mortal remains of a brave man" (*soi, ὁ φιλέ hestia, parakatatithemai taut' andros agathou leipsana*).

Elsewhere in his rhetorical work,<sup>13</sup> in his oration against Ophrydas in the defense of Ioannes Xiphilinos, Psellos again cites *Phocion*. Comparing Xiphilinos with Phocion he says: "He does not stand back after Phocion, who was also called his [i.e. Demosthenes'] knife" (*mēden Phōkiōnos echein to elatton, hos ka-keinou kopis ōnomazeto*). This clearly refers to *Phocion* 5.9, where Demosthenes is cited as having said to his friends when Phocion stood up to speak: "the knife for my words is here" (*hē tōn emōn logōn kopis parestin*).<sup>14</sup>

Not always are the effects of *Phocion* on Psellos' writings that explicit. In the case of *Phocion* 2.6–7 it is the reasoning without any direct quotation that we find again in *Chronographia* VI 210 (a 7) and 211 (a 8).<sup>14–20</sup> Plutarch paints the picture of the ideal politician. He should behave in a temperate way, neither too harsh and uncompromising nor too soft and indulgent, thus fulfilling the peripatetic ethical ideal of moderation (*mesotēs*).<sup>15</sup> To illustrate this he uses an astronomical phenomenon, the inclination of the ecliptic which makes the right mixture and creates the preconditions for life on earth. The same reasoning illustrated by the same example is found in Psellos. He criticises his rival Leon Paraspondylos (whom he does not name) as morally rigorous and coarse in dealing with people, not owning the right political character (*politikon ēthos*) and failing to keep the right middle (*mesotēs*) between the extremes (*Chronogr.* 6.211 [a 8].8). Psellos admires, as he says, Paraspondylos' strength and consistent attitude, but does not consider him suitable for life on earth. Such a character would only be consistent with future life. In a similar way Plutarch reports Cicero's dictum about Cato (*Phoc.* 3.1) according to which Cato behaves as if he were in Plato's republic, not in Romulus'.<sup>16</sup> Psellos recurs to the same astronomical example as Plutarch, comparing the integrative attitude of the properly behaving politician (*politikos anēr*) to the ecliptic (*loxōsis*). A little later (6.213 [a 10].9) he calls this astronomic *loxōsis* life-giving (*zōēphoros*). Plutarch spoke about the oblique and inclined path of the sun (*ton hēlion ... loxō kai paregkeklimenō poreias schēmati chrōmenon*) keeping safe all things (*hē sōzetai panta*). We see Psellos not quoting or copying Plutarch in a direct way, but being inspired by his reasoning.

<sup>13</sup> Dennis (1994: *Or.* 3, 116–118).

<sup>14</sup> Plutarch quotes the dictum also in *Dem.* 10.4 and *Praec. ger. reip.* 803E in the same wording.

<sup>15</sup> For *mesotēs* in Plutarch, see Becchi (2014: 83).

<sup>16</sup> To this dictum Psellos alludes in his oration on Konstantinos Monomachos, Dennis (1994: *Or.* 2.208–210): "Justice he pursued not according to the common laws, but he acted like in Plato's Republic, after which also Cato strove".

In Psellos' panegyric oration<sup>17</sup> 15.12–14 Leon Paraspondylos, who has an unapproachable character (at least in the opinion of the people), is compared to Phocion, Cato and Pericles. This is clearly a reference to the corresponding *Lives* of Plutarch, who says exactly that about the three.<sup>18</sup>

In *Chronographia* 7.75.5–7 Psellos describes how Isaak Komnenos behaved when he was ill, i.e. in sharp contrast to Cato. “It is said that Cato, when he ran a fever or when he had another illness”, kept quiet, “until this period was over and the critical time came to a turning point” (... *pyrettonta ... est' an ... metabaloi*). The Plutarchan reminiscences are obvious. In *Cato the Younger* 5.8 we read: “Running a fever” he remained alone “until he felt a certain relief and a turning point of the illness (*pyrettōn gar ... achri hou ... metabolēn tou nosēmatos*).”<sup>19</sup>

The word combination *rhomphaia* (“axe”) + *barysidēros* (“heavy with iron”) together with a form of a verb meaning “swing” (*seiō, episeiō, kradainō*) and an adverb is to be found only in Plutarch, Psellos, and Anna Komnene. Plutarch, in *Aemilius Paulus* 18.5, uses this phrase in his description of the Thracians: “they are swinging axes heavy with iron from their right shoulders”. Psellos adopts the expression with slight variations in five places (5.27.2; 6.3.5–6; 6.87.15–16; 7.22.8–9; 7.149.7–8) to characterise the equipment of the Varangian guard or of the people revolting against Michael V. Anna Komnene, in *Alexias* 9.9.2 (27–28) as well as in many other places<sup>20</sup> is inspired by the *Chronographia*. The word combination “ill-omened” (*apaisios*) + “outcry” (*phōnē*) found in *Chronographia* 6.110.4 can go back to Plutarch's *Roman questions* 266D, but occurs also in Ioannes Philoponos, *On the creation of the world* 5.1 (p. 207.21–2 Reichardt). However, because Psellos (*Chronogr.* 6.97.15) obviously borrowed the word combination “sound loudly around” (*peripsophō*) + “crash” (*patagos*) from the same context in Plutarch, we can assume that Psellos knew this context very well and had kept both word combinations in his mind.

We come across a more complex situation in *Chronogr.* 6.197.20–2. There Psellos informs us about key issues of his philosophical talks to emperor Konstantinos Monomachos. These were “the first cause” (*to prōton aition*), one of the central concepts in Aristotle and his commentators, but also later in the Fathers of the Church and in Psellos' own philosophical and theological

<sup>17</sup> Dennis (1994: 135).

<sup>18</sup> See *Phoc.* 5.1; *Ca. Mi.* 1.3–4; *Per.* 5.3.

<sup>19</sup> Psellos used *Ca. Mi.* 6 as reference text in his characterisation of Basileios II, see above.

<sup>20</sup> See Linnér (1983) and Reinsch (2014: 534–535).

works, and “the manifold beautiful” (*to pantodapon kalon*), a major issue in Plato’s *Phaedrus*. The third issue he cites was virtue (*aretē*) and the last one the soul (*psychē*). On this theme Psellos gives some explanation. He treated, so he says, the two basic aspects or parts of the soul: the one part which is connected with the body and the other which is free from such a bond, and in doing so he utilised, without quoting his source, some phrases that Plutarch had coined in *On the sign of Socrates* 591E–592A, adapting them to the new context. Furthermore, he does not use them in the same order as they appear in Plutarch’s text and alters the wording in parts. The metaphors, however, applied by Plutarch, are so characteristic that there can be no doubt that Psellos has exactly this passage in mind.

In Plutarch the statements about the souls are embedded in a matryoshka-like narrative context (i.e. like in these Russian puppets there is a story inside another story inside another story and so on): Caphisias reports on a meeting, where Simmias had reported what Timarchus had told to him what, in turn, an Unnamed and Invisible had explained to him during an underworld vision, when Timarchus saw some different kinds of stars. Some souls, so the Invisible explained, are mixed with the most pure part, some others left this part outside themselves and it seems “like something swimming at the top touching them only lightly on the head” (*hoion akroploun epipsauon ek kefalēs*), “a buoy on the surface” (*artēma koryphaion*), whereas the rest of the person is under water. “What is immersed in the body” (*to ... hypobrychion en tō sōmati pheromenon*) is called soul. What is exempt from passing out of existence, people call mind (*nous*) and they believe that it is inside themselves, but in reality it is the *daimōn*. Then the Invisible explains to Timarchus which kind of souls the different categories of stars he sees are and he invites him to detect in each case “the bond of union” (*ton syndesmon*) with the soul. So Timarchus looked at the stars with different intensity “roading at anchor” (*aposaleontas*) “like we see the corks which mark the nets swimming on the surface of the sea” (*hōspertous ta diktya diasēmainontas en tē thalassē phellous horōmen epipheromenous*).

Psellos detaches the phrases from their context and takes them meaning the human soul generally being divided in two parts: “demonstrating (to Monomachos) which part of it (the soul) is in motion inside the body and which part is like a cork swimming at the top touching only slightly the fetter, like a buoy on the surface ... not pressed by the bond” (*deiknys ti men to pheromenon tautēs <en> tō sōmati, ti de to dikēn phellou akroploun epithigganōn tē pedē hoion artēma koryphaion ... mē sympiezomenon tō desmō*). It seems that Psellos had the whole Plutarchan passage about the soul in mind, freely adapting it to the new context.

## 6 Conclusion

To sum up, it can be stated that Psellos' *Chronographia*, the biographically orientated history of the Byzantine Emperors of the eleventh century, has close affinity with basic Plutarchan concepts visible in the *Parallel lives*. Both are concentrating on the character of the literary figures. In both works apophthegmata are an index of *éthos*. In their political philosophy they are near to one another relying on the Aristotelian concept of ethical mean (*mesotēs*). In addition to this general line Psellos refers directly to figures of the *Parallel lives*, especially to Phocion and Cato Minor, he uses word combinations to be found only in Plutarch and relies on philosophical considerations known to him from Plutarchan works, adapting them to his own ideas.

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# Plutarch and Zonaras: from Biography to a Chronicle with a Political Leaning

*Theofili Kampianaki*

## 1 Introduction\*

You are to be greatly thanked for your great labours  
 John, the wonder of chronographers!

These are the first couple of verses of an epigram inscribed in f. 101v of the Vaticanus gr. 136, a thirteenth-century manuscript containing the *Epitome of histories* (*Epitomē historiōn*), John Zonaras' extensive world chronicle.<sup>1</sup> Zonaras was a prolific author, who, in addition to his chronicle, produced an interpretation of canon law, two short canonical treatises, lives of saints, a canon for the Theotokos and commentaries on ecclesiastical poetry.<sup>2</sup> In terms of its length, the *Epitome of histories* (henceforth *Epitome*) certainly justifies the praise as a "wonder".<sup>3</sup> It is one of the longest historical accounts written during the Byzantine period, second only to the chronicles of George Syncellos and Theophanes Confessor combined. Like all Byzantine historical narratives traditionally characterised as chronicles, the *Epitome* runs from the Creation of the world to its author's own time; it stops in 1118, the year when Alexios I Komnenos passed away and his son John II acceded to the throne of the Empire.

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- 1 The epigram was first edited by Pietro Leone, Leone (1992/3: 63–65). More recently, it was edited again in the *Database of Byzantine Book Epigrams* [www.dbbe.ugent.be/occ/1023](http://www.dbbe.ugent.be/occ/1023) (last accessed 2 March 2017).
- 2 General information on Zonaras can be found in Hunger (1978: 416–419) and Treadgold (2013: 388–399); Mallan (forthcoming). For Zonaras as commentator of canon law, see Troiannos (2012: 177–178); Macrides (1990), (1991); Pieler (1991). For Zonaras as hagiographer, see Kaltsogianni (2013); Paschalidis (2011).
- 3 See Karpozilos (2009: 465–489) for some general information on the chronicle and Grigoriadis (1998), particularly for a literary and linguistic analysis.

It is difficult to determine the exact period in which Zonaras lived and wrote. He must have been born sometime during the last two decades of the eleventh century and died after 1161.<sup>4</sup> An internal textual indication strongly suggests that he finished the composition of the *Epitome* in or after 1143, the year of John II Komnenos' death.<sup>5</sup> The text was used as a source by Constantine Manasses for his own chronicle, the *Chronikē synopsis*, which can be dated to between 1143 and 1152.<sup>6</sup> One can thus establish c. 1150 as the *terminus ante quem* for the completion of the *Epitome*.

Zonaras was reasonably well-read in the classics. From his distinguished career as a judicial official,<sup>7</sup> we can deduce that he must have received a good education and must have been familiar with the archaising language of civil bureaucracy. In the *Epitome*, he draws material from several prestigious works of ancient authors:<sup>8</sup> Flavius Josephus' *Jewish antiquities* and *Jewish war*,<sup>9</sup> Herodotus' *Histories*, Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, Cassius Dio's *Roman history*, and of course some of the *Parallel lives*,<sup>10</sup> Plutarch's monumental corpus of biographies of famous mythical or historical figures of Greece and Rome. Byzantine men of culture held Plutarch in high esteem, paying tribute to him not only as a historical source, but also as a literary model and stylistic exemplar.<sup>11</sup>

The *Epitome* is the only Byzantine chronicle in which we find a large amount of Plutarchan material.<sup>12</sup> Zonaras employs eleven of Plutarch's *Lives*

<sup>4</sup> Grigoriadis (1998: 206–207); Macrides (1991: 591).

<sup>5</sup> Treadgold (2013: 389–390); Angold (1996: 400).

<sup>6</sup> An investigation into the sources exploited by Manasses can be found in Karpozilos (2009: 539–542, 549–553). For information about the dating of the *Chronikē synopsis*, see Jeffreys (2012: 273–274).

<sup>7</sup> We know that Zonaras had occupied the offices of *megas droungarios* and *protasekretis*, both high positions in the judicial system, before assuming the monk's habit and withdrawing to the monastery of the Theotokos Pantanassa in the small island of St Glykeria. These titles usually appear along with his name in manuscripts transmitting his chronicle; see Leone (1991); Macrides (1991).

<sup>8</sup> For a general overview of the sources that underpin the *Epitome*, see Büttner-Wobst (1890); Karpozilos (2009: 469–485); Treadgold (2013: 393–397).

<sup>9</sup> Particularly for the presence of Josephan material in the *Epitome*, see Bowman (1987: 371–372) and Leoni (2015: 312). As is generally believed, Zonaras must have had indirect access to the *Jewish Antiquities*, employing the work via an epitome; Schreckenberg (1972: 141–144). This epitome has been published in Niese (1896).

<sup>10</sup> For some observations about Zonaras' treatment of Dio, see Millar (1964: 2–3); Urso (2011) and Fromentin (2013). I have previously examined elements of the use of the *Lives* in the *Epitome* in Kampianaki (2017). For Zonaras and Plutarch, see also Pelling (1973); Manfredini (1992; 1993) and Fögen (1998).

<sup>11</sup> Discussions about Plutarch's reception in the Byzantine times can be found in Garzya (1998), Pade (2014: 535–536), Xenophontos (2014a), (2014b), (2015), and (2018).

<sup>12</sup> Kampianaki (2017: 17–18).

in his work, nine of which are biographies of well-known Roman figures: Romulus, Numa, Publicola, Camillus, Aemilius Paulus, Pompey, Caesar, Brutus and Antony. Zonaras shows a marked interest in the Roman past of Byzantium. Perhaps with the exception of John of Antioch (seventh century),<sup>13</sup> he is the only Byzantine chronicler that we know of who paid such a great attention to the Roman Republic,<sup>14</sup> a period which most Byzantine chroniclers altogether omitted from their narratives.<sup>15</sup> Along with Dio, Plutarch is one of Zonaras' principal authorities for his presentation of early Roman history and Republican Rome. In addition to the Roman *Lives*, the chronicler draws on the *Life of Alexander the Great* and the *Life of the Persian ruler Artaxerxes* to discuss in brief the so-called *skapheusin* (scaphism), a method of execution used by the ancient Persians.<sup>16</sup>

This chapter comprises two sections. The first draws a comparison between the *Lives* and the *Epitome*, concentrating particularly on the generic differences between the two works and examining how the Plutarchan material in Zonaras' text is shaped by the thematic content and stylistic conventions of the Byzantine chronographic tradition. The second section explores how the chronicler gives a political spin to his appropriation of the Roman *Lives* and how he handles the *Life of Alexander* with the intention of polishing Alexander's image as a model of leadership.

## 2 Using Biographies, Writing a Chronicle

Plutarch and Zonaras differ from each other on two significant points. To begin with, the two writers display a substantial difference in their approach to recording the past. The *Lives* are biographical narratives; in his work, Plutarch innovatively reformed the genre of ancient biography by setting a goal of improving the character of his audience. In a frequently-cited passage in the essay introducing the *Life of Alexander*, Plutarch explains the personality-focused scope of his project:

For it is not Histories that I am writing, but Lives; and in the most illustrious deeds there is not always a manifestation of virtue or vice, nay, a slight thing like a phrase or a jest often makes a greater revelation of

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<sup>13</sup> See the text, as reconstructed in the edition of Roberto (2005).

<sup>14</sup> Macrides and Magdalino (1992: 126–131); Matheou (2016).

<sup>15</sup> Jeffreys (1979: 206–207).

<sup>16</sup> For a discussion about the punishment of scaphism, see Kampianaki (2017: 19–20).

character than battles where thousands fall, or the greatest armaments, or sieges of cities.<sup>17</sup>

This extract suggests that Plutarch was not as much concerned with recounting the acts of important historical personalities as he was with providing an insight into their personalities and focusing on their ethical attributes, thus helping his readers to draw valuable moral lessons.<sup>18</sup> Byzantine chroniclers, bringing together a variety of information on early Christian history, Roman antiquities and the more recent past of Byzantium, sought to compose compact histories of their state. Zonaras himself explains the nature of his inquiry in the preface of the *Epitome*: "... a short history, which succinctly teaches the readers of the text the most important deeds and other circumstances".<sup>19</sup> In the *Epitome* the author gives a record of the most notable historical events in the form of a summary, creating in a sense an abridged history of Byzantium since the biblical Creation.

Understandably, the overall goal of the *Epitome* dictates the type of information Zonaras selects from Plutarch. The chronicler reads and exploits the *Lives* primarily as historical texts, showing an interest first and foremost in their historical background rather than their moral implications.<sup>20</sup> On several occasions, therefore, he tries to downplay the ethical tone underlying the Plutarchan text. For example, Plutarch relates that Sulla pressed Pompey to divorce his wife and marry Sulla's step-daughter, who was herself married and expecting a child. Pompey's wife was forced to leave "in dishonour, and in piteous plight", an unfortunate circumstance which led her mother to take her own life. Plutarch tellingly comments that "this calamity was added to the tragedy of that second marriage".<sup>21</sup> The final misfortune in these series of tragic events was that Sulla's step-daughter died in childbirth, soon after her wedding to Pompey. Zonaras pointedly does not mention any of the dramatic events surrounding Pompey's divorce and second marriage; he is not at all concerned

<sup>17</sup> *Alex.* 1.2. Trans. by Perrin (1919).

<sup>18</sup> This passage from the *Alexander* is often discussed by scholars looking into Plutarch's biographical methods and aims. See, for example, Geiger (2014: 293–294, 297); Burridge (2004: 61–62); Kaesser (2004: 363–364). Duff (2002: 14–22) points out that the distinction between historiography and biography is not clear-cut in the *Lives* and "does not apply equally" to all the corpus of the *Lives*.

<sup>19</sup> *Epitome* 1, 7.5–8. All translations of the *Epitome* into English are my own.

<sup>20</sup> A notable exception to this 'practice' is the use and adaptation of the *Life of Numa* by the chronicler, who attempts to "Christianise" the image of the second king of Rome: see below.

<sup>21</sup> These events are narrated in *Pomp.* 9.2–3. The translation of the segments into English is from Perrin (1917).

with the ethical aspect of this story. Instead, he focuses solely on the fact that Sulla forced Pompey to proceed with this marriage because he sought to secure an alliance with him. Echoing Plutarch, Zonaras emphasises that “this marriage was characteristic of a tyranny”.<sup>22</sup> What the chronicler wants is to impress on his audience that Sulla’s alliance to Pompey was a political move.

There is also an explicit stylistic difference between the two authors, which is connected with the presence of speeches attributed to prominent historical figures. Orations, many of which are quite extensive and elaborate, appear frequently in the *Lives* and often come up at key moments in the narrative.<sup>23</sup> Plutarch imaginatively composed speeches and used them as vehicles for shedding light on the *ethos*, the character, of the speakers. The literary conventions of chronicle writing, however, which were known both to Zonaras and to his audience, were not in line with this stylistic feature of the Plutarchan text. Departing from the norms of classical historiography, Byzantine chroniclers as a rule avoided long speeches. Zonaras himself criticises previous authors of historical narratives for composing lengthy orations as a means of demonstrating their rhetorical abilities.

For who will gain some benefit ... from knowing what this demagogue discussed with the people, what the general discussed with the soldiers, or what that emperor told the Persian ambassadors, or somebody else to those of the Celts or the Scythians or perhaps to those from Egypt or to those of the Dacians and the Triballians, and what another, speaking publicly, said to the senate or the populace?<sup>24</sup>

In the chronicler’s view, orations ascribed to well-known individuals do not add anything substantial to historical accounts, nor are they beneficial to their readers.

The way Zonaras handles the speeches in the *Lives* certainly reflects this aesthetic approach, hence the fact that he often excludes them from his work altogether. It is suggestive, for example, that, in recording the attack of the Sabines against Rome after the abduction of their women, he omits the emotional speech of the Sabine queen Hersilia, who emphasised the strong family ties that had developed between the Sabine women and their Roman husbands.<sup>25</sup> In the *Romulus*, Plutarch presents Hersilia’s plea as the turning point for the

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<sup>22</sup> *Epitome II*, 300.8–13.

<sup>23</sup> Pelling (1988: 316–317); Buszard (2010).

<sup>24</sup> *Epitome I*, 6.1–6.

<sup>25</sup> *Rom.* 19.4–7.

two parties to reach a truce. Zonaras apparently does not consider the queen's speech of great import and simply notes that the words of the Sabine women prompted the leaders of the two parties to reconsider their course of action.<sup>26</sup> Likewise, the chronicler skips the lengthy speech ascribed to Numa explaining why he initially rejected the offer to take the Roman throne – that is, because, accustomed to living in peace and dedicating himself to his philosophical preoccupations, he could not lead a warlike nation.<sup>27</sup> This speech, in which Plutarch addresses the distinction between a king and a military leader, was of no interest to Zonaras, who does not comment at all on the reasons why Numa was reluctant at first to take the reins of Rome.

One can sometimes clearly discern why the author has opted to abridge Plutarch's speeches instead of excluding them entirely from his text. A good example is the speech of Pomponius, Numa's father, who tries to convince his son to take the throne. One of the arguments used by Pomponius is that rulership is a "gift of the gods" and "a service rendered to God".<sup>28</sup> Offering a short summary of the speech, the chronicler draws particularly on these points: "and his father privately urged Numa to accept leadership as a divine gift and a service rendered to God".<sup>29</sup> The reason why the chronicler draws attention to this speech with a short summary is probably because these segments of Pomponius' speech echo the idea of the divine origin of kingship, a concept of critical importance to the Byzantines. The belief that the Emperor derived his authority from God was the foundation stone of Byzantine political thought. The basis on which Zonaras summarises his material in this case is the affinity of the Plutarchan text with political ideas relevant to the Byzantine context and, consequently, familiar to his audience.

Despite Zonaras' divergences from Plutarch in terms of approach and style, one of the elements in the *Lives* that must have appealed to the chronicler is that Plutarch was not concerned with recounting battles and sieges in detail, as can be inferred from the extract from the *Alexander* quoted above. Like Plutarch, Zonaras does not have much taste for military history. Making a literary critique of earlier authors of histories in his proem, he disapproves of those who dealt extensively with strategy, lines of battle, struggles, army encampments and the geography of battlefields.<sup>30</sup> Due to the relatively limited emphasis placed by Plutarch on military affairs, the *Lives* must have been an obvious

<sup>26</sup> *Epitome I*, 13.23–14.1.

<sup>27</sup> *Num.* 5.2–5.

<sup>28</sup> The whole of Pomponius' speech can be found in *Num.* 6.2–4; Perrin (1914).

<sup>29</sup> *Epitome II*, 20.6–7.

<sup>30</sup> *Epitome I*, 4.7–19.

source of information for Zonaras to exploit in the *Epitome*. Nevertheless, on occasions when Plutarch does discuss military developments, Zonaras tends to omit much of the material from his source. For instance, he speaks very little of Pompey's marching against Gnaeus Domitius in Africa and the subsequent invasion of Numidia, which we find in chapters 11 and 12 of the *Life* dedicated to the Roman general.<sup>31</sup>

### 3 Writing a Chronicle and Putting the Stress on Political Affairs

To turn the focus of the discussion particularly to Zonaras' treatment of the Roman *Lives*, it should be noted that, first of all, in terms of structure, Plutarch was a convenient source on which the chronicler could base his account of Rome.<sup>32</sup> It was easy for the author to follow Plutarch's biographical model and thus to structure his presentation of Roman antiquities in short units dedicated to a single individual. Arranging his account of the first kings of Rome by reigns, he abridges the *Lives* of Romulus and Numa to form units dealing specifically with the first two kings of Rome. Likewise, in condensing the *Lives* of Pompey and Caesar, he essentially breaks his account of the first Triumvirate into two units, each centred on the history and accomplishments of the two most important political men of the time.

In a previous study about Zonaras' use of the *Lives*, I pointed out that the author is inclined to exclude much information about ancient Roman customs, festivals, means of worship, laws, and religious institutions, as such material was not directly relevant to the twelfth-century context.<sup>33</sup> The focus in Zonaras' account of Roman history rests very much on political affairs, which is exemplified in his use of Plutarchan material. The chronicler takes abundant information of a political nature from the *Lives* and inserts it into the *Epitome*. Some of the data he draws relates to political developments marking the history of Rome. One such example is when he quotes the *Romulus* almost verbatim to tell us that the first Roman king, after the death of his grandfather Numitor, handed the governance of Alba Longa over to its people, propelling prominent Roman men to seek a form of government without a king, through which power would be shared by the many.<sup>34</sup> A little later, we find details about the

<sup>31</sup> *Epitome* II, 301.1–8; *Pomp.* 11.1–12.5.

<sup>32</sup> For key investigations of Plutarch's attitude to Rome and Romans, see Stadter (2014a), (2014b); Pelling (1986). A general discussion about Plutarch's Roman *Lives* can be found in Pelling (1979).

<sup>33</sup> Kampianaki (2017: 25–26).

<sup>34</sup> *Epitome* II, 16.6–10; *Rom.* 27.1.

political instability in Rome following the death of Romulus.<sup>35</sup> Zonaras also takes an interest in passages where Plutarch himself tries to account for important developments in Roman politics. Summarising significant extracts from the *Caesar*, for instance, the author explains the reasons why the Roman polity was corrupt during the age of Pompey and Caesar,<sup>36</sup> and highlights that Caesar met his downfall because he lost public support.<sup>37</sup>

Zonaras, moreover, draws attention to elements of Roman political and social organisation. He describes the social classes established by Romulus in considerable detail, particularly emphasising the role of the patricians.<sup>38</sup> He also informs us of the two bodies of lifeguards created by the first Roman king for his protection, adding later that one of them was disbanded by Numa.<sup>39</sup> We later read that, following Camillus' withdrawal from public life, one consul was chosen from the patricians and one from the people.<sup>40</sup> The chronicler's interest in the political institutions of Rome is further evidenced by the fact that he mentions the Latin terms that appear in Plutarch's *Romulus* and relate to a social or political group, such as *popoulous* for the Roman people, *senaton* for the senate and *Keleras* for Romulus' guards, a word which Zonaras, following Plutarch, defines as meaning "those who are quick".<sup>41</sup>

In view of these considerations, it seems that the author, deriving material from Plutarch's biographies, sought to give a record of the Roman past with a strong political leaning. That the section of the *Epitome* dealing with Rome has a political thrust is clearly illustrated by Zonaras' proem, where the writer outlines the main contents of the Roman section of his chronicle. It is essential, according to him, to write about the origins of the Roman nation and to recount the story of Romulus, the founder of Rome. The extract that follows is worth quoting in full:

[Since I recalled the history of the Romans and the history of Rome, I thought it necessary to write about those and to record ...] how at first this city was ruled by a king and what kind of customs and laws Romans used. And how Tarquinius Superbus changed kingship to tyranny and was

<sup>35</sup> *Epitome* II, 18.6–19.12; *Num.* 2.4–3.2.

<sup>36</sup> *Epitome* II, 317.8–16; *Caes.* 28.4–6.

<sup>37</sup> *Epitome* II, 331.10–17; *Caes.* 60.1–3.

<sup>38</sup> *Epitome* II, 10.11–11.11; *Rom.* 13.1–5.

<sup>39</sup> *Epitome* II, 16.1–5 and 20.18–19, respectively; *Rom.* 26.2–3 and *Num.* 7.4, respectively.

<sup>40</sup> *Epitome* II, 91.3–5; *Cam.* 42.1–5.

<sup>41</sup> *Epitome* II, 10.15, 10.19–20 and 16.1–5, respectively; *Rom.* 13.2, 13.3 and 10.3, respectively – Plutarch tells us of the body of *Keleras* in 26.2, but explains the meaning of the Latin term earlier, in 10.3, the chapter in which Zonaras found the translation.

ousted from power, and how many and what kind of wars Rome suffered because of his deposition. And how the Roman state was transformed into an aristocracy and then into a republic, with consuls, dictators and tribunes in charge of public affairs.... and how later the Roman state became a monarchy. And that Gaius Julius Caesar was the first monarch, although not overtly ...<sup>42</sup>

Here, Zonaras expresses his wish to make his readers aware of how the Roman polity, initially a kingship, was gradually transformed into a tyranny, an aristocracy and then into a republic. In other words, through his account of the history of Rome he intends to demonstrate the evolution of the Roman system of government over the course of time. The content that Zonaras derives from Plutarch certainly serves this scheme; he selects much information about Rome's political history and institutions, and does not allow this content to be clouded by other types of material present in the *Lives*, such as long accounts of battles, lengthy speeches and unnecessary information about ancient Roman culture.

#### 4      The *Life of Alexander*: the Only Greek *Life* in Zonaras' Chronicle

Unlike the Roman *Lives*, which are extensively used by Zonaras, the Greek *Lives* he must have had at his disposal are all ignored, with the exception of the *Alexander*.<sup>43</sup> Plutarch arranged most of his biographies in pairs, coupling the *Life* of a Greek with one of a Roman. As is indicated by the evidence of the manuscript transmission, the paired *Lives* usually circulated together.<sup>44</sup> From this, one can conclude that the Greek *Lives* linked with the Roman ones that are used in the *Epitome* were probably available to Zonaras too, but apparently the chronicler had no interest in their content. This is hardly surprising, since the authors of world chronicles in Byzantium concentrated almost exclusively on Christian history and Roman antiquities, barely acknowledging Greek affairs. From the Greek *Lives* at his disposal Zonaras singles out and employs Plutarch's biography of Alexander, because information about the Macedonian king – a widely popular figure in the Byzantine world – was likely

<sup>42</sup> *Epitome* 1, 12.10–13, 12.16–13.1 and 13.6–8.

<sup>43</sup> An introduction and commentary on Plutarch's *Alexander* can be found in Scott-Kilvert and Duff (2012). For an analysis of the *Alexander*, see Duff (2002:14–22); Hammond (1993).

<sup>44</sup> Ziegler (1951: 949–951); Russell (1973: 146). See also the introduction in Perrin (1967: xiv–xvi), in which an outline of the most significant manuscripts that preserve the *Lives* is given.

to catch the attention of his audience. Using Plutarch, moreover, and providing a summary of Alexander's life and achievements would be useful, as such an overview could smoothly lead the discussion to the episode that Zonaras wished to recount right afterwards: the king's legendary visit to Jerusalem, a story the chronicler derives from the epitome of Josephus' *Jewish antiquities*.<sup>45</sup>

It is quite striking that the chronicler has a liking for the brief dialogues and compact sayings that we find in many stories in the *Life of Alexander*. Quirky sayings attributed to well-known historical personalities must have generally appealed to him, as can be deduced from the fact that later in his narrative he takes memorable sayings ascribed to Byzantine Emperors from Michael Psellos' short chronicle, the *Historia syntomos*,<sup>46</sup> as well as borrowing the string of sayings pronounced by the Emperor Constantine x Doukas from Psellos' *Chronography*.<sup>47</sup> In the case of the *Alexander*, although Zonaras heavily abridges his source, he incorporates the majority of quotations that appear in Plutarch's text, such as the young Alexander's saying that he would only take part in the foot-race at the Olympic Games if he could contend with kings,<sup>48</sup> as well as his saying following the meeting with the famous Cynic philosopher Diogenes that, if he were not Alexander, he would like to be Diogenes.<sup>49</sup> We also find, for instance, the short dialogue between Alexander and the general Perdiccas when the king distributed the royal properties to his companions: the Macedonian commander asked Alexander what he would keep for himself and he, in turn, replied that he would keep his hopes.<sup>50</sup> Another well-known saying contained in the *Epitome* was Alexander's answer when his commander Parmenio suggested launching a night attack during the battle at Gaugamela, namely, that he would not steal his victory.<sup>51</sup> All dialogues and quotations ascribed to either Alexander or other persons serve to encapsulate the Macedonian ruler's mind, underlining his wittiness and brilliance of thought. That Zonaras inserts most of them into his work reflects an awareness of Plutarch's purpose behind using short quotes in his *Lives*, namely, to reveal a person's character. The chronicler probably also understands that, unlike long speeches that he criticises in his prologue, a brief quotation or a short exchange of words can stick in the memory of his audience.

45 See footnote 9 above.

46 Particularly for Zonaras' use of imperial sayings taken from the *Historia syntomos*, see Dželebdžić (2007); Kampianaki (2016: 316).

47 *Epitome* III, 682.7–12.

48 *Epitome* I, 330.18–20; *Alex.* 4.10.

49 *Epitome* I, 333.11–13; *Alex.* 14.5.

50 *Epitome* I, 333.14–18; *Alex.* 15.4.

51 *Epitome* I, 339.20–21; *Alex.* 31.7.

A further consideration about Zonaras' use of the *Alexander* is that he leaves out or swiftly passes over some of the best-known episodes in Plutarch's narrative that reflect badly on the Macedonian leader. In particular, he excludes from his text Alexander's quarrel with the nobleman Attalus, who, while drunk, insinuated that the young prince was not a legitimate heir to the Macedonian throne. Alexander angrily threw a cup at him, an incident which filled Philip with rage against his son and led Alexander to leave the court.<sup>52</sup> Zonaras also tells us nothing about Alexander's attempt to secure an alliance with the Carian ruler Pixodarus by offering his hand in marriage to Pixodarus' daughter, a proposal for which he was severely chastised by his father.<sup>53</sup> Another episode that is noticeably absent from the *Epitome* is the private ceremony during which Alexander demanded that his Macedonian companions prostrate themselves before him, a ritual considered by Greeks to be humiliating.<sup>54</sup> The burning of the great palace in Persepolis is also barely mentioned by the chronicler.<sup>55</sup> Plutarch explains in detail how the Macedonian king was persuaded by the Athenian *hetaira* Thaïs to destroy the Persian capital and thus avenge the Persians for burning and destroying Athens in 480 BC.<sup>56</sup> In concluding the chapter dealing with this episode, Plutarch notes: "it is agreed that Alexander speedily repented and gave orders to put out the fire".<sup>57</sup> Zonaras gives a brief nod to this incident and tries to play down its importance by paraphrasing only the last sentence of Plutarch's chapter: "Having set the palace on fire, he speedily repented and gave orders to put out the fire in them". The result of the exclusion or abbreviation of this material is that the text effectively downplays negative traits of Alexander's personality that emerge from Plutarch's *Life*, particularly the Macedonian king's quick temper and struggle to tame his anger.

Taken together, these two observations about Zonaras' treatment of *Alexander* suggest that he endeavoured to polish Alexander's image to some extent. He therefore selected material to underscore the sharpness and intelligence of the Macedonian leader. Thanks to their succinctness, the quotations and dialogues inserted by the chronicler into his text would have left a strong impression on the minds of his audience about Alexander's positive attributes. At the same time, Zonaras omitted or abbreviated content from Plutarch that pointed to Alexander's flaws and tainted his image both as a person and as a ruler. A more or less similar practice can be observed in the way Zonaras

<sup>52</sup> *Alex.* 9.6–11.

<sup>53</sup> *Alex.* 10.1–3.

<sup>54</sup> *Alex.* 54.4–55.9.

<sup>55</sup> *Epitome*, I, 340.19–20.

<sup>56</sup> *Alex.* 38.1–8.

<sup>57</sup> *Alex.* 38.8; Perrin (1919).

handles the portrait of Numa. As I have argued elsewhere, the author derives information from *Numa* that shows the second Roman king as an exemplary secular and religious leader, discussing his programme of legislation and emphasising his virtue, peace-loving attitude and philanthropy.<sup>58</sup> He excludes, however, all details offered by Plutarch about the religious and ideological basis of Numa's policy, particularly the king's adherence to Pythagorean philosophy. In a way, Zonaras tries to convey an image of Numa as a Roman king who possesses the qualities of a good Christian. The implication of all this is that the chronicler understands the Plutarchan *Alexander* and *Numa* as texts providing potential models of leadership, which he tries to appropriate by giving emphasis to the strengths and playing down, or even concealing, the weaknesses of both kings.

## 5 Conclusion

It is now time to bring what has been discussed so far to a conclusion. For Byzantine authors, the selection of content and style went hand in hand with the selection of genre. Zonaras' adaptations of Plutarchan material are largely concerned with the generic features of the literary tradition of chronicle writing. Unlike Plutarch, who produced biographies with the purpose of morally instructing his readers, Zonaras composed a historical narrative and, naturally, drew much more information related to the historical context of the *Lives* than information with ethical undertones. Plutarch's orations, one of the literary means he employs to achieve his goal, are not relevant to the Byzantine chro-nographic tradition either. Depending on their content, therefore, they are either summarised or altogether cut away by the chronicler.

Zonaras exploits Plutarch's Roman *Lives* to compile a narrative of Roman antiquities with a strong political overlay. For this reason, he includes extracts in his work that deal with political developments and elements of socio-political institutions, as well as passages that offer Plutarch's own interpretation of Roman political issues. The fact that Zonaras perceives his account of the Roman past as a history of successive forms of government indicates that for him Plutarch's protagonists, Romulus, Numa, Publicola, Camillus, Pompey, Caesar, Brutus and Antony, were not only significant historical personalities, but also figures of critical importance to Rome's political and constitutional history.

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58 Kampianaki (2017: 26–28).

What characterises the chronicler's reading and adaptation of the *Alexander* is his attempt to paint a more positive picture of the Macedonian ruler by selecting sayings emphasising his cleverness and understating the importance of stories that reflect poorly on Alexander's character. At the same time, he shows an evident appreciation of one of the literary attributes of Plutarch's text, the use of short dialogues and sayings, comprehending both their purpose and effect on the audience.

More broadly speaking, Zonaras' treatment of the Plutarchan biographical material exemplifies the key feature of his overall method of work: his endeavour to tailor multifarious sources to fit both the stylistic conventions of chronicles and his own authorial agenda.

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## Plutarch in Twelfth-Century Learned Culture

*Michael Grünbart*

The poet John Mauropus (c. 990–after 1075), teacher of Michael Psellos, composed a well-known poem underlining the prominence and importance of Plutarch in the Byzantine world of the High Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup> It runs as follows:

Epigram on Plato and Plutarch. If you ever should want to remove from your wrath some of the others (= pagans), oh Christ of mine, you could raise up Plato and Plutarch for me; for both, in word and manner adhere mostly to your laws. If they did not recognise that you are God of all, then there is a need only of your goodness, through which gift you are willing to save all.<sup>2</sup>

In the late and post-Byzantine period Plutarch was amongst the pagan philosophers and learned men who were depicted in sacral contexts. Many examples are known from churches in Greece and the Southern Balkan. Plutarch has been painted together with Plato and the Sibyl in the Church of Bogorodica Ljeviška at Prizren (dated to 1310–1313).<sup>3</sup> Plutarch can also be found in the monastery *Tōn Philanthropēnōn* on the small island in the Pambotida-lake at Ioannina (dated to 1542).<sup>4</sup>

Byzantine writers were well acquainted with the extensive oeuvre of Plutarch, which served both as a source for ideas and as a model in different ways.<sup>5</sup> The importance of Plutarch and the reception of his works in Byzantium became a more prominent research topic in recent years.<sup>6</sup> The frame of this

<sup>1</sup> The letter collection of Mauropus just indicated one allusion to Plutarch, John Mauropus, *Letters* 60, 1–2 (Plutarch, *Moralia* 193D; 545D).

<sup>2</sup> John Mauropus, *Epigram* no. 43 (24 De Lagarde), trans. by Humble (forthcoming). I am grateful to Noreen Humble for sending me her article including the translated epigram; she focuses on Plutarch in the 10th century and his appreciation in late Byzantium.

<sup>3</sup> Djurić (2006).

<sup>4</sup> Another example is visible in the monastery of Metamorphosis at Meteora.

<sup>5</sup> Wilson (1996) (the index just refers to ancient authors up to the ninth century); *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, Oxford 1991, III 1687–1688; Baldwin (1995) added examples from the seventh (George Pisides) and tenth centuries (Constantine VII). See also Garzya (1998); Humble (2013) on Plutarch in tenth century Byzantine historiography.

<sup>6</sup> Russell (2008).

overview forms the long twelfth century, i.e. the rule of the Komnenian dynasty from 1081 to 1185. That period saw an intensification of the engagement with the Greek classical tradition in many ways. The interest in ancient literature grew and it served both as a source of creative mimesis and as a cultural redefinition.<sup>7</sup> Plutarch's works, especially his *Moralia* and the *Parallel lives* will be in the centre of the following overview; they left traces ranging from quotations to allusions in all types of Byzantine literature: epistolography, historiography, novel and rhetorical literature.<sup>8</sup> If we look into the tradition of manuscripts that has been intensively investigated,<sup>9</sup> it becomes apparent that the *Lives* are preserved in two lines of transmission in the tenth century: one group of textual witnesses offers a chronological arrangement of the material, the other organises chapters in geographical order.<sup>10</sup> Only a few references concerning manuscripts of Plutarchan works in libraries can be found. A prominent statement is provided by Henricus Aristippus (d. c. 1162), archdeacon of Catania, who participated in an embassy to the Byzantine capital. In a letter he refers to a copy of Plutarchan works in Sicilian libraries, but does not describe its contents.<sup>11</sup>

Byzantine literary production was accompanied by theoretical treatises as well. Photios, the learned patriarch of the ninth century, left many observations of his critical reading in his "reading diary" (including Plutarch) (see Németh in this volume). It goes without saying that Plutarch was discussed and analysed in grammatical literature. Gregory of Corinth (Pardos) (12th century), who started as a teacher in Constantinople and then became metropolitan of Corinth, left several works concerning grammar and rhetoric.<sup>12</sup> In his handbook on style he recommends ancient and Byzantine writers. In the section dealing with deliberative speech he lists Plutarch after the church fathers (John Chrysostom and Basil) and pagan orators (Aristides, Isocrates, Demosthenes, Libanios and Chorikios). Gregorios is urged to add his comment with "if ethical discourses belong here".<sup>13</sup> The discussion of performing rhetoric and providing ethical integrity date back to antiquity ("vir bonus"). Pardos continues his evaluations and recommendations. A longer passage should be

<sup>7</sup> The latter has been stressed by Kaldellis (2007) and Marciniak (2013).

<sup>8</sup> I am aware of the problem of classification; cf. Mullett (1992).

<sup>9</sup> Irigoin (1987); Manfredini (1988); Garzya (1988). Important manuscripts are: Barberianus graecus (10th c.), Mosquensis SS Synodi gr. 501 (11th c.), Parisinus graecus 1955, 1956 (11th c.) and Vindobonensis gr. 129 (12th c.).

<sup>10</sup> Irigoin (1982–1983).

<sup>11</sup> Wilson (1996: 213–214).

<sup>12</sup> Kominis (1960); Browning (1963: 19–21); Wilson (1996: 184–190); Robins (1993: 163–172).

<sup>13</sup> Gregory of Corinth, *Works* 127, 28–29.

quoted in order to give an idea as to how a Byzantine grammarian instructs his readers:

If you wish to get a good reputation nowadays you must write works that are a blend of rhetorical and philosophical notions. If you are merely rhetorical you will look like a mediocre speech writer, if you are unduly philosophical you will appear too dry and lacking in taste. So a mixture is to be recommended. As an example of such a mixture take works by the great Gregory the theologian, Basil the Great, (Gregory) the bishop of Nyssa, Psellos' orations and letters, Synesios, Themistios, Plutarch and many others who to your knowledge follow their lead.<sup>14</sup>

Mixing and combining different authors and genres can be demonstrated by various examples: that method of composing literary pieces formed a common pattern in twelfth century Byzantium and it met the expectations of the learned auditorium (and readership).<sup>15</sup>

Gregory Pardos was familiar with the literary output of many contemporaries and evaluated it as well. Besides Michael Psellos he commented on John Tzetzes (c. 1110–after 1160).<sup>16</sup> Tzetzes belongs to the most versatile, albeit disputed, *literati* of that period. Although he received a good education, his attempts to get a position in the administrative system failed. After he had left the province, Tzetzes had to sell the books of his collection one by one. In the end he just owned the *Parallel lives* of Plutarch and some fragmentary mathematical texts. Since no one could judge their importance they were not worth a Byzantine copper coin.<sup>17</sup> In the following years he earned his living by teaching.<sup>18</sup>

His letter-collection sheds light on his daily problems, but also reflects the practice of his teaching.<sup>19</sup> The letters were accompanied by a commentary in political verse, called *historiae* (the term “chiliades” has been used since the

<sup>14</sup> Gregory of Corinth, *Works* 128, 45–52. Trans. by Wilson (1996: 186).

<sup>15</sup> Agapitos (1998). Even in Byzantine letters the combination of types can be found, see. e.g. John Tzetzes, *Letters* 168 (letter 57) or 173 (letter 100).

<sup>16</sup> Grünbart (1996) (Tzetzes' letters, the main source for the reconstruction of his life, can be dated until the 1160s); Agiotis (2013) argues for the years 1174–1178 as a *terminus post quem* (based on a possible quotation from Eustathios), but his argument is not convincing; see Cullhed (2015); Tzetzes' death after the mid 1160s still seems to be the best option, cf. Grünbart (2005: 424–425).

<sup>17</sup> John Tzetzes, *Exegesis of the Iliad* 15, 13–18.

<sup>18</sup> See Grünbart (2005).

<sup>19</sup> Especially John Tzetzes, *Letters* no. 22.

first edition by Nikolaus Gerbel in 1564).<sup>20</sup> That commentary served as a handbook for instructing his pupils in various aspects of classical Greek and Roman culture; memorising verses enhanced the process of learning. It has been noticed that Tzetzes significantly emphasises Greek/Hellenic culture following a common trend in that period.<sup>21</sup>

In addition, Tzetzes frequently inserted his name in order to label his literary output. Sometimes he criticised stealing and plagiarising colleagues.<sup>22</sup> Tzetzes often complained about his poverty; that statement was not a *topos*, but merely a reflection of his daily problems: he had to find sponsors for his writings, given that his *Theogony* and the *Allegories of the Iliad* were works of commission. He also instructed Bertha of Sulzbach (then Eirene), who had come to Constantinople in order to get married to Manuel I Komnenos (in 1146). For the princess's education Tzetzes arranged a version of the *Iliad* aimed at providing an introduction to Greek/Byzantine literature and culture.<sup>23</sup> The twenty-four books reflecting the divisions of the *Iliad* were composed in dodecasyllabic verses. It combined summaries of the events of the siege of Troy with allegorical interpretations from various perspectives. Tzetzes refers to Plutarch many times in his *Histories* and even in the *Allegories of the Iliad*;<sup>24</sup> he describes various Roman personalities like Marcus Caedicius (*Hist.* 4.661–669, *Plut. Life of Camillus* 14), Vindicius (*Hist.* 4.513–521, *Plut. Life of Publicola* 4) and Julius Caesar (*Hist.* 3.79–85, *Plut. Life of Caesar*) in passing. He deals with Cato the Elder more extensively. Cato educated and instructed his son and Tzetzes found that an apt analogy to his own life, since his father coached him in a similar manner. This relation is echoed in a letter addressed to John Smeniates, a tax collector/official.<sup>25</sup> Smeniates wrote an exhortation to his son that has been praised by John Tzetzes due to its refined style and composition.<sup>26</sup> The learned scholar found another imitation of Cato, his favourite inspiring example from antiquity. Even in his *Allegories* he introduces Plutarch as an authority on explaining a passage concerning the sceptre or seer's staff

<sup>20</sup> Leone (2007) John Tzetzes, *Histories*.

<sup>21</sup> Marcinia (2013), Kaldellis (2007: 301–306).

<sup>22</sup> On the idea of plagiarism in Byzantium, see Grünbart (2010).

<sup>23</sup> John Tzetzes, *Allegories of the Iliad*; it is divided into 24 books and written in dodecasyllabic verses.

<sup>24</sup> See Xenophontos (2014: 191, n. 17) (10 instances); Tzetzes introduces authority by using, for instance, the expression “I think, Plutarch says ...”, John Tzetzes, *Histories* 1.283.

<sup>25</sup> Grünbart (1996: 203); Xenophontos (2014a: 193).

<sup>26</sup> John Tzetzes, *Letters* 114 (no. 7).

of Chryses, a priest of Apollo: “Plutarch calls the staff an auguring rod, while Cocceianus Cassius Dio says augur rod.”<sup>27</sup>

## 1 Komnenian Epistolography

Plutarch is among the most quoted authors in Byzantine epistolography. A systematic, although unspecific, statistical survey based on the *indices fontium* of the editions available in the 1980s shows 15 references to the ancient author.<sup>28</sup> However, the method of counting quotations could be carried on and ameliorated, since many new editions as well as detailed studies on authors have been undertaken in the last 20 years. The letter collection of Michael Choniates, the brother of Niketas Choniates<sup>29</sup> and metropolitan of Athens (c. 1138–c. 1222), was not included in the analysis, but a couple of allusions to Plutarchan works can be detected in the learned man’s correspondence.<sup>30</sup>

However, Plutarch left traces in other categories of rhetorical literature as well. A key case-study is Nikephoros Basilakes (c. 1115–after 1182), who worked in the imperial chancery and became a teacher at the Constantinopolitan Hagia Sophia. Basilakes gained popularity in the educated circles by using new techniques of learning and instructing his students. He composed several panegyrics addressed to the emperor John II Komnenos (1118–1143) and members of his court. He also participated in theological discussions (especially liturgical formulas reflecting Christ’s blood and body). In 1156/1167 he got involved in the process against Soterichos Panteugenēs, who continued and elaborated the thoughts of Basilakes. He was exiled to Philippopolis, where he probably spent the rest of his life dedicated to his studies.

A couple of rhetorical pieces by Basilakes are preserved. The progymnasma is a rhetorical exercise that mainly deals with Greek mythology and history, while Christian topics are normally lacking. It was originally designed to prepare and instruct students for public performance (*gymnasma*). Some Byzantine authors like Nikephoros Basilakes created masterpieces reviving the classical past. A rhetorical composition of his is entitled “Narrative” (*diēgēma*),

<sup>27</sup> John Tzetzes, *Allegories of the Iliad* 1 31–32.

<sup>28</sup> Littlewood (1988: 151). In terms of comparison that is a rather low number, but see note 30.

<sup>29</sup> On Plutarch as a model for Niketas, see Alicia Simpson in this volume.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Choniates, *Letters* (the editor lists almost 40 allusions and quotations in the *index fontium*). Such a high number of references underscores the need for a systematic study of citation techniques in Byzantine letter-writing (corroborating Littlewood’s study). Cf. Papageorgiou (1901).

also mentioned by Plutarch in the *Parallel lives*.<sup>31</sup> The *diēgēma* was part of his *progymnasmata*. The contents of that piece runs as follows: King Pythes was keen on gold and tried to get as much as he could find. His wife was able to change her husband's mind by explaining to him that gold is totally useless to the body. The morale is that female prudence conquers male passion. Basilakes takes an antique myth, remodels and adapts it to the literary form he uses. The editor argued against a link to Plutarch and thought that Basilakes had the famous story of king Midas in mind.<sup>32</sup> However, it has been demonstrated quite recently that the original source can be identified as Plutarchan.<sup>33</sup> The misleading title – the passage does not originate in the *Parallel lives* – can be explained as a *lapsus memoriae* or a confusion on the part of the scribe. Or it might be an ascription by the author Basilakes himself in order to make that piece more attractive to a learned audience.<sup>34</sup>

## 2 Komnenian Historiography

Byzantine historiography yields the best examples of Plutarchan mimesis and remodelling.<sup>35</sup> It has been demonstrated that he left traces in tenth century works, especially in works connected to Constantine VII (944–959) like *Theophanes continuatus*.<sup>36</sup> Anna Komnene (1083–after 1150) wrote a panegyrical biography of her father Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118). She relied on Homer as a source and model (prominently echoed in the title *Alexias*). Her historiographical working technique includes elements of encomia and hagiography. Georgina Buckler, the first biographer of Anna, noted that the learned daughter of Alexios was familiar with Plutarch, who seems to have been more important to her than Thucydides.<sup>37</sup>

A couple of examples should underline her possible affinity to Plutarch. Alexios took church property for financing his soldiers, just as the Athenian politician Pericles made a similar attempt in order to get funding for his war.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Nikephoros Basilakes, *Progymnasma II*. Trans. by Xenophontos (2014b: 3–4).

<sup>32</sup> Pignani (1983: 16, n. 8).

<sup>33</sup> Xenophontos (2014b); Basilakes' exemplar has been identified with Plutarch's *Mulierum virtutes* 262D–263A.

<sup>34</sup> Xenophontos (2014b: 12).

<sup>35</sup> On mimesis in Byzantine historiography, see Scott (1981).

<sup>36</sup> Humble (2013).

<sup>37</sup> Buckler (1929: 86, 201–203, 488–490); Scott (1981: 71–72).

<sup>38</sup> Anna Komnene, *Alexias* V 2,1 (143, 72–76 Reinsch Kambylis); Plu., *Per.* 23,1. Trans. by Frankopan (2009: 153).

In a later passage of the *Alexias* the Emperor defends himself for this action; presiding like a judge, he says to his court in the palace: "what was removed has been spent on necessities, following the paradigm of Pericles, and it has been used to safeguard our honour".<sup>39</sup>

The best example can be found in book 13, where Anna describes her mother Eirene Dukaina:

Whenever she had to appear in public as empress at some important ceremony, she was overcome with modesty and a blush at once suffused her cheeks. The woman philosopher Theano once bared her elbow and someone playfully remarked, 'What a lovely elbow!' 'But nor for public show', she replied. Well, the empress, my mother, the image of majesty, the dwelling-place of saintliness, so far from being pleased to reveal to the common gaze an elbow or her eyes, was unwilling that even her voice should be heard by strangers.<sup>40</sup>

Anna uses and modifies a passage from Plutarch's *Advice on marriage*.<sup>41</sup> The philosopher Theano makes a statement that her bare elbow should not be visible in public. However, it cannot be taken for granted that Anna adopted that *paradeigma* directly from Plutarch, since the story is recorded in Stobaios' *Anthology* as well.<sup>42</sup>

Nikephoros Bryennios (c. 1162–1137), the husband of Anna, composed a historiographical work entitled *Material for history* (*hylē historias*). Leonora Neville devoted an intriguing study on the piece, investigating possible sources and inspirations for the high-born author.<sup>43</sup> She concludes that Bryennios did not refer to Plutarch directly, although it is apparent that he knew the ancient author, who was read by learned women and men in twelfth century Byzantium.<sup>44</sup> A striking passage where the author compares Arabates, an Alan mercenary, with Brasidas, general of the Spartans, runs as follows: "An arrow struck him in the right hand. But he pulled that arrow out and warded off the barbarian with it, just like Brasidas of old".<sup>45</sup> The naming of the hero, who died in the

<sup>39</sup> Anna Komnene, *Alexias* vi 3 (172, 48–173, 50 Reinsch Kambylis); Plu., *Per* 23. Trans. by Frankopan (2009: 157).

<sup>40</sup> Anna Komnene, *Alexias* XII 3, 3 (364,85–365,92 Reinsch Kambylis); Trans. by Frankopan (2009: 337–338).

<sup>41</sup> 142C; see Humble (forthcoming).

<sup>42</sup> Stobaios, *Anthology* 4.23,49a.

<sup>43</sup> Neville (2014).

<sup>44</sup> Cresci (2004: 130).

<sup>45</sup> Trans. by Neville (2014).

battle of Amphipolis in 422 BC, simplifies the identification of the source. In a Plutarchan collection containing sayings of the Spartans a similar passage is recorded: "In a battle he was wounded by a spear which pierced his shield, and, pulling the weapon out of the wound, with this very spear he slew the foe. Asked how he got his wound, he said, 'when my shield turned traitor'".<sup>46</sup> Subtle reading of the *Material for history* reveals other possible imitations: "Alexios (i.e. Komnenos, the Emperor and Anna's father) then appeared as the great hope of the Romans, later becoming a great help to the Romans, not yet wearing a full-blooming beard, but displaying military virtues even before the age at which the Roman historians say Scipio accompanied Aemilius while campaigning against Perseus of Macedonia".<sup>47</sup> Only in Plutarch's *Life of Aemilius Paulus* is the passage concerning the excursion of Scipio Aemilianus with his father against Perseus recorded.<sup>48</sup>

It has been noted that Bryennios was interested in marriages and alliances between families in the Roman empire. Plutarch's *Life of Pompey* lists the attempts of influential men to forge marriage connections with the ruler.<sup>49</sup> Bryennios' historical work mentions many high born women, a pattern that can be explained "by Nikephoros's desire to tell his story in the style of a classical Roman history".<sup>50</sup>

Another renowned historiographer of the Komnenian empire is John Zonaras (second half of twelfth century), who wrote an *Epitome historiarum* (*Epitome of histories*),<sup>51</sup> in which he paid special attention to the Roman *Res Publica*.<sup>52</sup> He epitomised parts of both Cassius Dio and Plutarch and inserted a considerable number of excerpts from the *Parallel lives*, but only three from the *Moralia* (excluding the *Virtues of women*). Zonaras did not rely on Dio for the historical events between 146 and 44 BC, and for the period from the death of Caesar (44 BC) to the reign of Nerva (d. 98 AD) he used both Plutarch and Cassius Dio.<sup>53</sup> It has been noted that some of his quotations cannot be found in the existing remains of ancient literature, and some of these may well refer to lost passages of Plutarch. For example, in chapter 10.11 the Byzantine historian narrates a passage from *Caesar* 60.3, correcting a common error, and continues with a passage that could not be identified by the editors or

<sup>46</sup> Plutarch, *Spartan sayings* 219C: trans. by Neville (2014: 43).

<sup>47</sup> Nikephoros Bryennios, *Material for history* 2.3.14–19.

<sup>48</sup> Neville (2014: 44).

<sup>49</sup> Neville (2014: 106).

<sup>50</sup> Neville (2014: 107).

<sup>51</sup> Karpozilos (2009: 465–500) and the same (2009: 48, 470) (on Plutarch).

<sup>52</sup> Macrides and Magdalino (1992: 127–131).

<sup>53</sup> Neville (2014: 37).

commentators. Christopher Pelling argues that Zonaras quoted from the lost preface of Plutarch.<sup>54</sup> The very technique of correcting an adulterated tradition imitates the typical behaviour of Zonaras' antique predecessor. Another passage of Zonaras can be interpreted in a similar way: in a chapter he refers to the story of Alexander,<sup>55</sup> but the passage he composes cannot be related to any known section of Plutarchan works. Again, the Byzantine historiographer either knew more original parts or could have referred to florilegia.<sup>56</sup>

### 3 Komnenian Novels

Influences of Plutarch can be detected in novels of that period as well. Especially Eumathios/Eustathios Makrembolites (second half of 12th century), who composed a prose romance entitled *Hysmine and Hysminias*, seems to quote or refer to the antique author at some passages. The novel, one of the four surviving Byzantine novels from the Komnenian period, imitates Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon* (second century AD). The opening sequence of Makrembolites' text forms a mixture of genres, combining elements of the ancient novel and of the essay-like style of Plutarch.<sup>57</sup> Traces of his influence can be found in structural compositions, such as the opposition between the Virtues and Eros,<sup>58</sup> in motifs, such as the wet dream of Hysminias,<sup>59</sup> and in quotations.<sup>60</sup>

The anonymous satirical dialogue *Timariōn* (first half of twelfth century) describes the journey of the hero, who was traveling to the annual fair at Thessalonike (the so-called Demetria, reflecting the patronage of Hagios Demetrios, the saint of the city). But he does not reach his point of destination, since he is taken to Hades, where he meets a world ruled by pagans. Only a few Christians are there as a sect. Anthony Kaldellis recently observed that the term "Demetria" may carry another connotation that should be taken into consideration: Plutarch describes the Eleusinian mysteries and gives them the

54 Pelling (1973: 344).

55 John Zonaras, *Epitomised history* 4.14 (304).

56 See Manfredini (1992) and (1993); see also Pelling (1973: 344). More on Zonaras and Plutarch in Kampionaki in this volume.

57 Nilsson (2001: 53); Agapitos (1998).

58 That model is often used by Plutarch in his *Parallel lives*; see Russell (2008: 110–115).

59 Nilsson (2001: 196 ff.); a similar passage can be found in a poem by Manganeios Prodromos, addressed to the emperor Manuel I Komnenos, but Plutarch may be the fountain as well, see Plutarch, *Life of Demetrius* 27.

60 Plutarch, *On friends and flatterers* 52B used in Eumathios Makrembolites, *Hysmine and Hysminias* 4.15.1; see Agapitos (2000: 7–9).

name "Demetria". As was well-known in antiquity, the rites performed there prepared the participants for the afterworld. Plutarch also provides the information that the people of Athens addressed the dead as "Demetrianoi".<sup>61</sup> There seems to be a possibility, then, that the composer of the *Timariōn* intentionally linked the hero's itinerary to Thessalonike with the underworld. As Plutarch was well-known in learned circles of the twelfth century, this subtle and erudite solution is plausible.<sup>62</sup>

A brief look into works that were presented at court complete the survey. The edition of Theodore Prodromos' so-called historical poems yields just one allusion to Plutarch, in a poem dedicated to the Emperor John II Komnenos. The Emperor acts like Julius Caesar and he follows the famous maxim *veni, vidi, vici*.<sup>63</sup> Even in speeches the Plutarchan influence is evident: for example, the orations of Eustathios of Thessalonike clearly indicate the rhetorician's familiarity with the Greek biographer.<sup>64</sup> Further investigations may lead to additional observations on adapting Plutarchan pieces in performative courtly literature.

#### 4 Conclusion

To sum up, it has become apparent that Plutarch was a well-known and appreciated authority in the learned circles of the long twelfth century. The evidence of manuscripts shows that most of his works were available. Plutarchan allusions can be found in various genres, and he was used and adapted in various, sometimes subversive ways. As noted, a major interpretative difficulty for modern scholars who seek to discover the possible sources of Byzantine authors is that these authors often rely on florilegia and excerpts, as well as on original texts. It is evident that Plutarch played a noticeable role in all texts of that period: epistolography and rhetoric (Michael Choniates, John Basilakes), historiography (Nikephoros Bryennios, Nicetas Choniates) and the novels (Eumathios Makrembolites). A systematic analysis will lead to a completion of the mosaic presented here.

61 Plutarch, *Demetr.* 12 and Plutarch, *On the face in the moon* 943A–B. Kaldellis (2007: 278–279).

62 Kaldellis (2012: 286).

63 Theodore Prodromos, *Historical Poems XI* 184–185; Cf. Plutarch, *Caes.* 50.

64 Eustathios of Thessalonike, *Opera minora* 405.

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## Precepts, Paradigms and Evaluations: Niketas Choniates' Use of Plutarch

*Alicia Simpson*

Niketas Choniates (c. 1155/1160–1217) is one of the most accomplished writers in Byzantine literature. He is the author of a lengthy, sophisticated and significant history covering the years 1118–1206, a series of imperial orations (*basilikoi logoi*) spanning the period of late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, and the theological treatise *Dogmatic panoply* (*Dogmatikē panoplia*), a refutation of heresies from the beginnings of Christianity to the author's own time. Born in Chonai (mod. Honas) in western Asia Minor, Niketas was sent to Constantinople at a young age. At the Byzantine capital he joined his elder brother Michael, who assumed responsibility for Niketas' upbringing and education. Michael went on to become a preeminent scholar and archbishop of Athens (1182–1204) while Niketas, having completed his studies in rhetoric, theology and the law, joined the ranks of the imperial administration. Beginning with the position of imperial secretary to Isaakios II Angelos (1185–1195), he advanced rapidly, occupying a number of high-ranking fiscal and judicial positions, and reaching the pinnacle of his career under Alexios III Angelos (1195–1203) when he was appointed to the important post of "logothete of the sekreta" (coordinator of the various departments of state). In the opening years of the thirteenth century Niketas also served as president of the senate.

The experience of the Fourth Crusade proved devastating for the wealthy and respected statesman. His palatial residence in the Sphorakion district had already been destroyed by the catastrophic fire set by the crusaders in August 1203, and though he and his family evaded capture when Constantinople was taken and sacked (12–13 April, 1204), they were forced to flee the city several days later. The family first sought refuge in Selymbria (mod. Silivri) in Thrace, where they remained until June 1206. Following a brief sojourn in Constantinople, they migrated to the Byzantine court-in-exile at Nicaea in Asia Minor, where Niketas expected to enter the service of the new Emperor Theodoros I Laskaris (1205–1221). Despite composing a number of orations (*selentia* and *basilikoi logoi*) for the Emperor Niketas was not appointed to any office in government. Reduced to serving high-ranking dignitaries, he repeatedly petitioned

influential friends, former colleagues and acquaintances for assistance, but to no avail. He died in 1217 (*terminus post quem*) in poverty and obscurity, leaving his children orphaned and his monumental history incomplete.<sup>1</sup>

As a historian Niketas wrote contemporary and near contemporary history structured in the format of “imperial biographies”, where the narrative is divided into separate books recounting the reigns of a particular Emperor and the story revolves round the character and actions of the protagonist. His historical work is distinguished by its complex rhetorical language and elaborate prose, and its wealth of allusions, imagery, metaphors, allegories and *exempla* drawn from ancient and biblical sources.<sup>2</sup> His imperial biographies, though conforming to classical models in covering the most important fields of imperial activity (military expeditions, diplomacy, administration, justice and finance), are presented within a continuous narrative of events that is enriched with intricate character portraits, epic battle pieces, piquant stories, narrative *ekphrasis*, fictitious speeches, naturalistic scenes and *mirabilia*.<sup>3</sup> Writing in the stimulating literary climate of the twelfth century, Niketas’ style was no doubt influenced by contemporary trends such as the revival of the ancient novel; the predilection for satire and parody; the prevalence of highly-stylised rhetorical works; the so-called “mixing of genres”; and, more generally, the revival of the literary and aesthetic principles of classicism.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the author indulges in the rhetorical art of *variatio*, rendering sections of his work comparable to literary genres such as comedy, tragedy and epic. At the same time, however, he is preoccupied with the principles of didacticism and morality, offering his readers historical lessons from the past and underscoring events through *exempla*, situational analogies and universal truths.<sup>5</sup>

As a writer Niketas shows creative engagement with ancient literature.<sup>6</sup> He was well read in the classics and during the long winter nights he would “concentrate his mind and enrich his reasoning with books, and find wisdom

<sup>1</sup> For Niketas’ biography, see van Dieten (1971: 1–55); Magoulias (1985: IX–CCVIII); Page (2008: 72–79); Simpson (2013a: 11–23).

<sup>2</sup> On Niketas’ language, see Maisano (1993a); Munitiz (2004: 22–27); Efthymiadis (2009: 53–58). On imagery, allusions and metaphors, see Kazhdan (1994); Bossina (2000); Littlewood (2007); Simpson (2013a: 274–279).

<sup>3</sup> For these, see the papers in Simpson and Efthymiadis (2009) and Simpson (2013a).

<sup>4</sup> For the revival, see in general Kaldellis (2007: 225–315; 2009: 1–43) and for Niketas, Maisano (1993b). For the influence of different genres in the *History*, see Ljubarskij (2004) and Magdalino (2007) on satire; Katsaros (2006) and Magoulias (2011) on drama; Bourbouhakis (2009) on the novel.

<sup>5</sup> See in detail, Simpson (2013a: 279–294).

<sup>6</sup> On the Byzantine reception and appropriation of the ancient classics, see now Kaldellis (2012: 71–85; 2015; esp. the introduction). On Niketas, Simpson (2013b).

and knowledge by unearthing the deeds of the ancients, or collecting and bringing to light advice and opinions".<sup>7</sup> From within a long-established tradition of Greek historical writing he adopts compositional techniques, assimilates literary and structural characteristics, employs textual parallels and situational analogies, and perhaps more importantly espouses values and perspectives. His mimesis of ancient historians, notably Flavius Josephus and Diodorus of Sicily is detectable not in parallels and analogies, but also in the moralising and didactic tone of his *History*, in the praise and censure of leading individuals and the leading role assigned to Divine Providence and Fortune.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, authors such as Homer along with the rhetoricians Aelian and Athenaeus, the satirist Lucian, the tragedians Euripides and Sophocles and the Greek paroemiographers figure prominently in the *History* since they provide Niketas with concise biographical sketches, a miscellany of excerpts and anecdotes, stories, essays and dialogues from which he draws his vocabulary, imagery, allusions, metaphors and *exempla*.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to these authors Niketas exploited Plutarch's *Parallel lives* and *Moralia*, both in the *History* and the orations. Byzantine interest in Plutarch's *oeuvre* and in particular the series of biographies in the *Parallel lives* peaked in the tenth to twelfth centuries, that is, in the period that witnessed a literary revival whose origins have been traced to the court of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos (sole emperor from 949–59). In fact, the *Lives* are thought to have served as models for the genre of imperial biography that superseded the annalistic mode of historical writing and was adopted by a series of historians in succession (*Theophanes continuatus*, Leo the Deacon, Michael Psellos, Anna Komnene, John Kinnamos, Niketas Choniates; see Németh, Delli and Reinsch in this volume). They may have also provided the general framework for the genre of "secular biography" and influenced the hagiographical writing of the period.<sup>10</sup> The popularity of the *Lives* climaxed in the twelfth century: John Zonaras incorporated Plutarchan excerpts in his *Epitome of histories*;<sup>11</sup> Anna Komnene frequently employed Plutarchan vocabulary and is known

<sup>7</sup> Nik. Chon. *Orat.* 117.18–21.

<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that Niketas has been identified as one of the scholiasts of a tenth-century manuscript of Diodorus of Sicily (Vat. Gr. 130). See in detail: Mazzucchi (1994; 1995); Kaldellis (2015; ch. 5).

<sup>9</sup> Simpson (2013b). On Niketas' use of Homer, see Vasilikopoulou-Ioannidou (1969); Maisano (2000); Gaul (2003); Saxe (2009).

<sup>10</sup> For the shift in Byzantine historical writing, see Markopoulos (2003; 2009). For Plutarchan influence, see the classic studies by Jenkins (1948; 1954), and now Humble (2013).

<sup>11</sup> Manfrendini (1992; 1993).

to have reworked several Plutarchan episodes in her narrative;<sup>12</sup> John Tzetzes appropriated the figure of Cato the Elder in his *Chiliades* for the purposes of self-projection and famously refused to sell his copy of the *Parallel lives* even though he was in financial penury;<sup>13</sup> and Nikephoros Basilakes adapted the anecdote of the Lydian king Pythes in his *Progymnasmata* (see also Kampianaki and Grünbart in this volume).<sup>14</sup>

It is therefore not surprising that Niketas Choniates would draw on Plutarch. He used both the *Parallel lives* and the *Moralia*, though he is far more indebted to the former. This reflects the transmission and circulation of the two corpora in Byzantium where the *Parallel lives* achieved standardisation much earlier than the *Moralia*.<sup>15</sup> Niketas' focus on the character and deeds of individual rulers no doubt made the *Parallel lives* an attractive model. More importantly, however, the ethical-pedagogic purpose of the *Lives* accorded well with the moralising outlook and didactic purpose of Niketas' imperial biographies. Indeed, Plutarchan precepts such as the revelation of the subjects' virtues and vices, the exploration of issues of good and evil, the aversion to despotism, the preference for enlightened monarchy, and the emphasis on the virtue of humanity all found resonance with Niketas.<sup>16</sup> That is the reason why his Plutarchan borrowings consist mainly of comparisons of persons and situational analogies meant to illustrate virtue or vice and offer paradigms and evaluations. In what follows I will examine a representative sample of such borrowings with the aim of discerning specific patterns and purposes in Niketas' use of the ancient author. I will begin with the *History* and then proceed to the *Orations*, which as a different genre merit separate investigation.

## 1      The *History*

Throughout the *History* Niketas employs the rhetorical technique of comparison of persons and stories in his account with biblical, historical or mythological figures and narratives. This was the *exemplum* (Greek: *paradeigma*) which could take on the form of an allusion, a name-mentioning, or a narration.<sup>17</sup> In a classic use of the historical *exemplum*, the emperor Manuel I Komnenos

<sup>12</sup> Buckler (1929: 202–208). See now Humble (forthcoming).

<sup>13</sup> Xenophontos (2014b).

<sup>14</sup> Xenophontos (2014a).

<sup>15</sup> Humble (forthcoming).

<sup>16</sup> For Plutarch, see Duff (1999). For Niketas, Kazhdan (1994) and Magdalino (1983).

<sup>17</sup> For the use of biblical and Greek (mainly) mythological *exempla* in the *History*, see Efthymiadis (2009: 101–119).

(1143–1180) is likened to the Athenian general Themistocles in being wrapped in his own thoughts and passing sleepless nights when contemplating how the empire should react to the Norman Sicilian attacks on Greece (1147). To those who enquired about his behaviour, he answered (like Themistocles) that the trophy of Miltiades would not let him sleep.<sup>18</sup> Niketas goes on to recount how Manuel, having first sought the counsel of experts, decided to wage war against the Sicilians on both land and sea since he had realised that the conflict would be long and difficult. For that purpose, he ordered the imperial fleet to be repaired and new ships to be constructed. Soon enough a mighty fleet made up of cavalry transports, fire-bearing ships, fifty-oared ships, ships carrying provisions, and even light piratical vessels was collected and made ready for the expedition while infantry forces numbering in the thousands were also mustered. With such a powerful force, Manuel went on to expel the Norman Sicilians from the strategically important island of Corfu (1148–1149), and then boldly proceeded to attack them on their own territory across the Adriatic.<sup>19</sup> To those familiar with Plutarch's story the comparison is clear: as Themistocles had realised that Marathon was only the beginning of a greater war and that the Athenians would need a strong naval force to defeat the Persians,<sup>20</sup> so Manuel understood that the attack on Greece was but an episode in the Sicilian war, and that the empire needed to build up its fleet to gain ultimate victory.

The Emperor Andronikos I Komnenos (1183–1185), though most often compared to the cunning Odysseus, is also likened to the infamous Macedonian king Demetrios Poliorcetes. When Andronikos was deposed from the throne he fled Constantinople and took with him his mistress Maraptike, for whom Niketas claims, "he had a most ardent love and passion, even greater than that of Demetrios Poliorcetes of olden times for Lamia, whom he had taken captive in Cyprus when he campaigned against Ptolemy and who played the flute quite well".<sup>21</sup> The context of Plutarch's passage on Lamia – the conquest of Cyprus by Demetrios Poliorcetes – has absolutely nothing in common with Andronikos' desperate escape. The reference is ornamental (i.e. Niketas wishes to enliven his narration with a Plutarchan scene) but the Emperor's character is comparable to that of Demetrios Poliorcetes. We need only consider the trait (or rather vice) of licentiousness on account of which both men gained notoriety.<sup>22</sup> Though Maraptike makes but one appearance in Niketas' narrative

<sup>18</sup> Nik. Chon. *Hist.* 76.3–5; Plu. *Them.* 3.3–4.

<sup>19</sup> Nik. Chon. *Hist.* 77–91, 94–99.

<sup>20</sup> Plu. *Them.* 3.4–4.2.

<sup>21</sup> Nik. Chon. *Hist.* 347.35–38; Plu., *Demetr.* 16.1.

<sup>22</sup> Nik. Chon. *Hist.* 321–322; Plu., *Demetr.* 24.1, 27.1.

the author takes pleasure in making the comparison and no doubt in displaying his knowledge of Plutarch's story.

The emperors Isaakios II and Alexios III Angelos are likened to Plutarch's Osiris and Typhon. More specifically, when Alexios deposed his brother Isaakios and assumed the throne, certain men were astonished to see him seated comfortably on the gold-spangled couch, adorned in his brother's ornaments and showing no remorse whatsoever for what he had done. They predicted that "the change in rule would be the beginning of new misfortunes recalling the evils that Egypt had endured under Osiris and Typhon".<sup>23</sup> According to Plutarch's version of the Egyptian myth, Osiris, the pharaoh of Egypt, and Typhon were brothers. Prompted by jealousy and hostility Typhon and his co-conspirators contrived a treacherous plot to kill Osiris. The story contains the proverbial motif of conflict between brothers, and in the end Osiris' son Horus defeats Typhon, avenges his father and becomes pharaoh. The perfidious Alexios III conspired against his elder brother Isaakios with the most pre-eminent aristocrats in the empire and thereby gained the throne. But Isaakios' son, Alexios (IV), avenged his father when he overthrew his uncle and became emperor in one of the most notorious episodes in Byzantine history: the Fourth Crusade. Therefore Niketas' comparison could not have been more fitting.

In addition to the comparison of persons the Byzantine historian, a master storyteller himself, alludes to stories or parts of stories from Plutarch. When the grand admiral Andronikos Kontostephanos despaired of success in the campaign against Egypt (1169), he addressed his troops in order to incite them to launch one final attack against the city of Damietta. The pre-engagement speech, appropriately loaded with Homeric references, also contains an allusion to the myth of Theseus. In the climax of the speech Kontostephanos boldly declares that it would have been better not to have embarked upon the expedition in the first place rather than to return unsuccessful, since "now it will not be possible to hoist the white sails from which we sailed from Byzantium, but we will have to hoist the absolutely dark ones because of the blackness of our shame".<sup>24</sup> The allusion is elegant and subtle. In order to avoid disgrace, the admiral rouses his troops to storm the walls, engage the barbarians in battle, and fight until they take the city.

Finally, and most importantly, Niketas also attempts historical analogies. Following his romanticised description of the battle that occurred between the French Crusaders and the Turks on the Meander River (1148), Niketas claims that the horrific spectacle of the piles of bones of the fallen Turks, so

<sup>23</sup> Nik. Chon. *Hist.* 457.11–13; Plu., *De Is. et Os.* 351C–358E.

<sup>24</sup> Nik. Chon. *Hist.* 166.2–4; Plu., *Thes.* 17.4.

many and so high, could still be seen to his day, and that he himself saw them. He then comments:

The extent of the course of fences enclosing the vineyards of the Massalians, made from the bones of the Cimbri when the Roman Marius annihilated the barbarians, maybe known clearly to those who saw with their own eyes this strange deed and to the rest who heard it with their ears. What happened here would have perhaps surpassed the earlier deed were it not for the grandiloquent account of the Cimbri that exaggerated nature, turning it into myth.<sup>25</sup>

The historian is here referring to one of the great battle pieces in Plutarch's *Life of Marius*, where following the victory of the Roman general Marius over the Teutones and Ambrones in *Aquae Sextiae* (Aix-en-Provence) in 102 AD the people of Massalia are said to have fenced their vineyards around with the bones of the fallen.<sup>26</sup> Niketas' latent criticism of Plutarch's "grandiloquent account" (*megalophōnia historikē*) is in accordance with the historiographical theory that posed a fundamental distinction between poetry and history and defined truth as the sole objective of historical narratives.<sup>27</sup> The theory, eloquently expressed in Niketas' own preface, is nevertheless contradicted by the historian's frequent employment of poetic invention in his own narrative.<sup>28</sup> Thus, perhaps in this instance, Niketas' questioning of Plutarch's story serves to enhance the reliability of his own "grandiloquent account".

In the introduction to the final book that narrates the events after the conquest of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade in 1204, Niketas employs Plutarch's wisdom as expressed in the *Life of Solon*. He takes us through a variation of Plutarch's story, where the Athenian statesman, seeing the revolution of Peisistratos surreptitiously taking root, frequently conversed with the citizens in the marketplace in an attempt to quench the rising tyranny, for he thought was easier to stop an emerging evil than to destroy it once it has grown and become strong. Unable to convince anyone, he brought out arms and laid them before the doorways in the hope of inciting his fellow citizens to overthrow the

<sup>25</sup> Nik. Chon. *Hist.* 71.67–74.

<sup>26</sup> Plu. *Mar.* 21.3 though Niketas confuses the Teutones and Ambrones with the Cimbri who were defeated the following year in the battle of *Campi Raudii* (Vercelli). Cf. Zorzi (2012: 123).

<sup>27</sup> Pontani (2010: 161); Zorzi (2012: 123).

<sup>28</sup> Simpson (2013a: 256–262, 280–284). On the contradiction between the programmatic statements in the prefaces of Byzantine historians and their narratives, see Maisano (1985); Grigoriadis (1998).

tyrant. When no one sided with him, Solon reportedly said that he had done his best to defend his country and thereafter remained silent and wrote poems reproaching the Athenians for their irresolution. Niketas then quotes almost *verbatim* the following poem:

If now you suffer miserably through your own evildoing  
 Do not lay blame for this on the wrath of the gods  
 For you yourselves increased these by the giving of guards  
 And because of this you suffer base subjection.<sup>29</sup>

The historian then transports us back to the early thirteenth century, where he attempts to draw an analogy between Solon and a hypothetical individual who might have come to the rescue of the empire. He sadly reflects that as Solon's efforts had been in vain, so would those of one of his own generation who attempted to come to the assistance of a state whose emperors were reared in relaxation and completely ignorant of state affairs, snored more sweetly than Endymion and arrived earlier for dinner; so separated were they from what is appropriate and falsely led in everything that they sought flowers in the wintertime and craved fruit in the spring. The citizens, on the other hand, were possessed of a commercial and knavish nature; they did not awaken to the sound of the war trumpets, but slept soundly.<sup>30</sup>

Niketas' recourse to Plutarch in this important passage of his *History* serves a moral and didactic purpose by pointing to historical precedent and assigning responsibility for the present calamity. The historian's citation of Solon's poem constitutes an ethical, philosophical statement on the moral responsibility and culpability of human agents. Individuals rather than the gods are responsible for their actions and for the consequences of those actions.<sup>31</sup> As Solon had laid the responsibility on the Athenians for the tyranny of Pisistratus so Niketas placed the blame on the Byzantines for the Latin conquest of 1204.<sup>32</sup> He then added that "memory, like a fan that rekindles the remaining embers of the good fire buried in the soul into a still living flame, arouses concern against making the same mistake in the future", in the hope that his compatriots would learn their lesson.

From the above examples we can conclude the following: i) Niketas' Plutarchan references are non-explicit and multifunctional: they punctuate

<sup>29</sup> Plu. *Sol.* 30.4–6.

<sup>30</sup> Nik. Chon. *Hist.* 585.3–584.32.

<sup>31</sup> Owens (2010: 179–183).

<sup>32</sup> On historical causation in Choniates, see Simpson (2013a: 284–294).

and adorn the narrative, and more substantially they provide positive or negative paradigms and evaluations of present situations with recourse to the past; ii) his allusions and comparisons are usually evocative and presuppose knowledge of the Plutarchan text in order to be fully appreciated; iii) his Plutarchan borrowings are not cited *verbatim* (Solon's poem being the exception), but paraphrased and reworked so as to fit his own narrative; iv) in one instance Niketas even applies the technique of comparison so as to juxtapose his own account to that of Plutarch. All this indicates that the Byzantine historian was familiar with the original Plutarchan corpus (as opposed to having read excerpts) and that he had studied him carefully.

## 2      The *Orations*

As an orator Niketas followed the conventions of imperial panegyric in celebrating the Emperor by praising his virtues (usually bravery, justice, temperance, prudence, and clemency), extolling his accomplishments in war, celebrating the peace and prosperity he brings to his subjects, and employing the technique of comparison (Greek: *synkrisis*) where the subject always surpasses his model.<sup>33</sup> This technique required that Niketas employ ancient sources, and his orations – being rhetorical compositions – are loaded with elaborate comparisons that entail the mingling of biblical and pagan references and the use of images, metaphors and the like. Though the preeminent models for Niketas' emperors were the biblical king David, the paradigm of sacral rulership in Byzantium, and Alexander the Great, the ideal monarch, others could and were applied when the occasion was appropriate.<sup>34</sup>

A case in point is Isaakios II Angelos who is compared to the legendary lawmaker Lycurgus of Sparta. When praising the Emperor's compassionate nature (philanthropy being an important imperial virtue), Niketas naturally turns to scriptural injunction, which he deploys in conjunction with the several anecdotes from Plutarch's *Life of Lycurgus*. He begins with the presentation of Isaakios as a disciple of the gospels, a ruler who loves his enemies and does good to those who hate him.<sup>35</sup> Then he switches to Plutarch. He tells us that when Lycurgus found Apollo in doubt as to whether to pronounce him a man or a god, he released unharmed the man who had hurt his eyes even though he

<sup>33</sup> In this aspect the *synkrisis* differs from the *paradeigma*. For a discussion of both techniques (in a different context), see Rapp (2010).

<sup>34</sup> For David and Alexander, see van Dieten's *Index nominum*.

<sup>35</sup> Matthew 5:44.

was vexed with him; and when he took over Sparta, which he found filled with wars and in a terrible condition, he instituted laws and brought about a deep peace. Though the reference is brief it contains key elements of the Plutarchan account mixed in with a Herodotean reference to the story of Lycurgus: the visit to the Oracle of Delphi where Lycurgus was pronounced a god rather than a man; the story of Lycurgus' forgiveness of the young man Alcander who had put out one of his eyes; and the institution of laws and the bringing of peace to Sparta.<sup>36</sup> Next comes the comparison:

Whether our emperor has been a peacemaker and above Lycurgus in governing the state, my speech has already demonstrated, and those who wish to do so can consider it. But the fact that he [Isaakios] releases those whom no one would release and forgives those whom no one would forgive testifies that he obeys the commandment absolutely and above what is humanely possible.<sup>37</sup>

Lycurgus (a god rather than a man) functions as an *exemplum*, but one that Isaakios surpasses, as Byzantine emperors usually do. The coexistence of pagan and Christian elements in the closing of the comparison takes us back to its beginning where the Plutarchan reference followed scriptural injunction.

Isaakios is also compared to the Spartan king Agesilaus, a successful military leader admired for his courage, temperance, and toughness. In enumerating Isaakios' physical and spiritual qualities, Niketas praises the emperor for his military skill and perseverance:

Keeping to the field in times of war and enduring cold, unbearable heat, hunger and thirst, you became an example of courage and perseverance to your subjects even greater than that of the Spartan Agesilaus, who had once advanced upon the crossroads uncovered and barefoot, at another time had gone around bestriding a stick, and in winter time did not keep his hands in his pockets.<sup>38</sup>

The historian has here adapted two different Plutarchan anecdotes concerning Agesilaus though he also deployed certain elements of Aelian's *Miscellaneous*

<sup>36</sup> Nik. Chon. *Orat.* 97.16–22; Plu. *Lyc.* 5.3 (in this instance Niketas' text is closer to that of Herodotus 1.65: see apparatus), 11.2–12, 2.3, 5.1–2 (in the order in which they appear in Niketas' text).

<sup>37</sup> Nik. Chon. *Orat.* 97.22–26.

<sup>38</sup> Nik. Chon. *Orat.* 88.15–20.

*history*.<sup>39</sup> The first Plutarchan anecdote discusses the king's perseverance in keeping to the field and his indifference to heat and cold. Such qualities endeared him to the Greeks of Asia Minor who had long suffered under their Persian rulers, who were addicted to wealth and luxury.<sup>40</sup> The adaptation seems most appropriate for Niketas' purpose. The second anecdote, however, concerns Agesilaus' excessive fondness for his children. On one occasion, says Plutarch, the king was seen bestriding a stick and playing horse with his children.<sup>41</sup> Niketas certainly deploys the delightful anecdote out of context but probably in an effort to further illustrate Agesilaus' toughness.

As noted above, more common in Niketas' orations is the comparison of the Emperor with Alexander though in many instances the Byzantine author seems to rely on alternative sources. Such is the case with the marriage of Isaakios II to the Hungarian princess Margaret, which is contrasted to Alexander's bombastic wedding feast on the occasion of his marriage to the Persian princess Stateira as described by Athenaeus.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Theodoros I Laskaris is as an emperor whose courage and fearlessness outshines that of Alexander. This is illustrated by Theodoros' valiant actions in the battle of Antioch-on-the Meander against the Turks (1211) as compared with those of Alexander when he fought against the Mallians (325 BC) in the account of Arrian.<sup>43</sup> At other instances, however, Niketas turns to Plutarch. For example, he deploys Plutarch's story of the taming of Bucephalus in his account of the submission of the Vlach commander Dobromir Chrysos, who had rebelled against Alexios III and taken command of the fortress of Prosakon in Macedonia. He tells us that when Chrysos descended from the heights above and looked down into the Axios (Vardar) River flowing beside Prosakon, he saw a faint, inverted reflection of himself, and it seemed as though he had already submitted to the emperor. "But even if Chrysos dares to come out", says Niketas, "he would resemble Bucephalus, whom the ancients say was completely wild and unbridled because he saw his own reflection falling in front of him and stirring about, he fell upon it".<sup>44</sup> In this case the Emperor's enemy is likened to Alexander's horse in an effort to belittle him; just as Bucephalus would submit to Alexander so Chrysos would submit to Alexios.

Alexios himself is likened to the Athenian general Pericles in a masterful allusion meant to illustrate the emperor's clemency and gentleness (Greek:

39 Aelian *Hist. misc.* 7.13: on Agesilaus going about uncovered and barefoot.

40 Plu. *Ages.* 14.1–2.

41 Plu. *Ages.* 25.5.

42 Nik. Chon. *Orat.* 41.1–36; Athen., *Deipn.* 538b–539a.

43 Nik. Chon. *Orat.* 171.22 ff.; Arrian, *An.* 3.21.10, 6.10–11.

44 Nik. Chon. *Orat.* 109.11–17; Plu. *Alex.* 6.

*epieikia* and *hēmerotēs*). Having expounded on the emperor's philanthropy and solicitude, Niketas tells us that Alexios did not blind or mutilate his subjects and that "no woman put on black, mourning the death of a husband whom black death had enfolded because of him".<sup>45</sup> Similar sentiments were voiced by Pericles on his deathbed though in this instance Niketas probably derived the reference second-hand and combined it with a Homeric allusion.<sup>46</sup> According to Plutarch's story, while friends and noble citizens gathered around Pericles praising and commemorating his achievements and triumphs, he himself was amazed that no one mentioned his greatest and fairest deed: "for no living Athenian put on black clothes because of me".<sup>47</sup> Thus Plutarch concludes that the man was to be admired not only for his clemency and gentleness (*epieikia* and *praotēs*), but also because in his mind he regarded as his noblest deed that he did not gratify his envy or anger while exercising power and he did not treat any of his enemies as fatal foes.<sup>48</sup> Although such virtues were commonplace in the ideology of kingship, Plutarch is the most vocal of all ancient authors on *praotēs*, *epieikia*, and *philanthrōpia*.<sup>49</sup> Niketas too expounds on these virtues both for their own sake (i.e. virtue has its own rewards) and for the benefits they can bestow on those who practise them.<sup>50</sup> Thus Alexios will be rewarded by God who will strike down those foreign nations that plan rebellion and destruction and remove any man of a tyrannical disposition who wishes to seize the throne. Further he "will not allow for long the rod of sinners to be upon the lot of the righteous, for they will surpass themselves in wickedness and bring [upon themselves] divine judgment".<sup>51</sup> With this closing Niketas adds a further (biblical) layer to his comparison, which coexists in harmony with the Plutarchan reference.

If Niketas' style can be characterised by the mingling of (often numerous and different) pagan and biblical references, then the above examples illustrate that he was consciously eclectic in his selections. Plutarchan references were employed when they could be brought into connection with the virtue praised in the subject (perseverance, clemency, compassion, gentleness, courage, etc.) or when the story could be brought to bear some similarity with another story (Bucephalus and Dobromir Chrysos). That was, after all, the definition of the

45 Nik. Chon. *Orat.* 59.9–11. Cf. also Nik. Chon. *Hist.* 548.7–9.

46 The reference was used by Niketas' brother Michael: Mich. Chon. i: 318.28–319.3. Cf. Simpson (2013a: 240). For the Homeric allusion to black death: Hom. *Il.* 2.834.

47 Plu. *Per.* 38.3–4.

48 Plu. *Per.* 39.1.

49 De Romilly (1978: 275–308).

50 Nik. Chon. *Orat.* 58.21–60.7, 97.9–98.7.

51 Nik. Chon. *Orat.* 59.14–20. Cf. Psalm 124.3.

*exemplum*. But this is different from what Niketas was doing in the *History*, where Plutarchan borrowings often functioned as paradigms for the moral edification of the reader and were also used to evaluate one situation in terms of another. There were no lessons to be learned from the *basilikoi logoi*, which aimed to glorify the emperor. Therefore Niketas' subjects always surpass their models and his Plutarchan borrowings, though fitting, were more ornamental than didactic.

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## Maximos Planoudes and the Transmission of Plutarch's *Moralia*

*Inmaculada Pérez Martín*

From an early date Plutarch was one of the most widely read ancient authors in Byzantium. This is shown not only by the intense use made of his works by the writers forming the core of this volume, but also, in parallel, by the great number of codices that transmitted them from the beginning of the tenth century onwards.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the writings of Plutarch have the privilege of having been collected, read and corrected by one of the major players in the higher education and intellectual life of Byzantium, Maximos Planoudes (c. 1255–1305). Planoudes' interest in Plutarch and his plan to find the largest possible number of Plutarch's works marked a turning point in the history of the text, which enjoyed uninterrupted transmission from the reign of Leo VI onwards (886–912).<sup>2</sup>

Planoudes was a Byzantine scholar and professor whose fame goes beyond the study of the history of texts. His name is not unfamiliar to classical philologists, being associated with that of the *Planoudean anthology*, the great collection of ancient epigrams that arose in about 1299–1301 from the reorganisation of two great collections of epigrams which probably dated from the tenth century. Since he himself had censored and expurgated the verses which he felt were “more ignoble and shameful” (*to asemnoteron kai aischroteron*),<sup>3</sup> the *Anthology* has given Planoudes a reputation as a prude and has led to similar cases of censorship being attributed to him. Such is the case of the so-called *recensio ad usum delphini* (version for the use of the heir to the throne) of the *Moralia*, that is, a version of *On progress in virtue*, *On curiosity*, and *On friends and flatterers* which is characterised not only by the “moralisations”

<sup>1</sup> The reason lies not only in the predilection of Byzantine readers for Plutarch, who was a huge source of information and of fragmentary ancient texts: the length of Plutarch's *logoi* favoured their combination with those of other authors and broadened their circulation.

<sup>2</sup> Generally, on Plutarch's transmission, comprehensive studies are Irigoin (1992), Garzya (1998), Geiger (2008). On the transmission of the *Moralia* in Byzantium and the Italian Renaissance, the reader may find in Martinelli Tempesta (2013) a very useful and properly documented summary; cf. Garzya (1988a), Frazier (2005).

<sup>3</sup> Cameron (1993: 354), Maltomini (2008: 13, n. 7).

(i.e. prescription of moral standards by means of censorship) but also by prosodic changes in the word order and by innovations at the end of a period in order to obtain the Byzantine rhythmic clause.<sup>4</sup> In favour of the theory that this is a reworking by Planoudes intended for teaching<sup>5</sup> is the fact that the oldest manuscript is Matrit. 4690, copied in part by a collaborator of Planoudes.<sup>6</sup>

This prudish facet of Planoudes' personality did not prevent him, however, from cultivating a wide range of literary, historical and scientific interests, and undertaking translations of far from chaste Latin works such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.<sup>7</sup> From the pen of Planoudes there also came, as a proper complement to his teaching, grammatical and rhetorical works. But we know the variety of his interests not so much from the works he composed as from the codices he annotated and copied, many of them with other scribes, some of whom were no doubt his students, such as Ioannes Zarides.<sup>8</sup> But more important and with a greater impact on Greek antiquity is the fact that he rescued and put into circulation little-read authors whose works, without his intervention, would probably have been lost to posterity. Although the work done by Planoudes himself on each author needs to be defined, we have evidence of his participation in the transmission of Ptolemy, Diophantus, Cleomedes, Cassius Dio, Strabo, Pausanias, Aesop, Synesios, and Plutarch (to mention only some of the prose authors).<sup>9</sup>

In *Ep. 106*, written in about 1293, Planoudes included a rare expression of undisguised affection for a pagan author: "I have decided to transcribe the works of Plutarch because, as you know, I adore that man."<sup>10</sup> This enthusiastic phrase expresses in a sentimental and modest way the painstaking work of the philologist and summarises the essence of Planoudes' intervention in the reception of Plutarch: unlike Michael Psellos (see Reinsch and Delli in this volume) or Theodore Metochites (see Xenophontos in this volume), Planoudes did not

<sup>4</sup> Pohlenz (1913), Garzya (1988b: 50–52); Wilson (1970: 72–3); Reynolds-Wilson (1991: 74); Inglese (1996: 42–43, 67–68); Martinelli Tempesta (2013: 274–275).

<sup>5</sup> This is advocated by Karla (2006: 225–256).

<sup>6</sup> Pérez Martín (2001: 362).

<sup>7</sup> As well as (perhaps) Ovid's love poems, also slightly censored; cf. Wilson (1996: 230–231). On Planoudes' translations, Bianconi (2004: 554–564); on his Latin handwriting, Martinelli Tempesta (2005).

<sup>8</sup> Turyn (1972: 83); *PLP* 6462.

<sup>9</sup> On Planoudes' biography and activity, Wendel (1950), Wilson (1996: 230–241), Constantinides (1981: 66–89), Taxidis (2012). On Diophantus and Cassius Dio, Pérez Martín (2006) and (2015).

<sup>10</sup> *Emoi d' edoxe ta tou Ploutarchou grapsai biblia, pany gar, hōs oistha, ton andra philō,* Planoudes, *Ep. 106* (169.18–19 Leone). See also Grünbart in this volume for Mauropos, *Epigram* 43.

write a literary analysis of Plutarch nor did he rework his stories, like Ioannes Tzetzes. With Plutarch Planoudes did what he did best: he completed or recovered his work to ensure its preservation. In Plutarch's case, the intervention of Planoudes was not as crucial as in other less widely read authors, but even so his project of copying the works of Plutarch managed to create the first (and almost definitive) corpus of *Moralia*.

To carry this project out, Planoudes enjoyed the best possible conditions: in Constantinople he had at his disposal a wealth of libraries unrivalled in the rest of the Greek world (albeit diminished by the Fourth Crusade); in particular, he had access to the library of an imperial monastery where he would no doubt find many of the books that have justly bestowed on him his fame as a rescuer of texts.<sup>11</sup> It is no mere chance that the project he presented to the Emperor Andronikos II, by way of Theodoros Muzalon, to recover the books of that library was contemporaneous with his decision to copy Plutarch. Planoudes lived in at least two imperial monasteries, twinned with each other: that of the Archistrategos Michael on Mount Auxentios and that of the Christ Akataleptos in Constantinople.<sup>12</sup> Although his work usually connects him with another imperial monastery, that of the Christ of Chora, and although many of the books that Planoudes may have read later passed through the hands of Nikephoros Gregoras,<sup>13</sup> who lived in and was in charge of the library of Chora, the only proof that the activities of Planoudes took place there would be the note added by a Latin hand in Vat. gr. 177.<sup>14</sup>

Planoudes would already have been active in the imperial administration before becoming a monk and changing his name from Manuel to Maximos. This happened after 10 April 1283, when he signs the copy of a nomocanon with his baptismal name.<sup>15</sup> A day later, 11 April, Gregorios Kyprios was appointed Patriarch, and it may have been in the same process that Planoudes replaced him at the head of the school of the monastery of Akataleptos, where taking the habit would be the next step in his career. There he subscribed his copy

<sup>11</sup> The library of this monastery is mentioned by Planoudes in *Ep.* 67 (100.18–19 Leone) addressed to Theodoros Boilas Muzalon (*PLP* 19.439), when he was *megas logothetes* (1282–1294); cf. Constantinides (1980: 70–71), Taxidis (2012: 80–83), who dates it from 1294.

<sup>12</sup> On both monasteries, cf. now De Gregorio (2010: 118–121), Taxidis (2012: 20–23).

<sup>13</sup> Bianconi (2005), Pérez Martín (2015).

<sup>14</sup> Vat. gr. 177, f. IIv: *Claudii Ptolomei liber geographie et est proprius domini Maximi philosophi greci ac monaci in monacerio Chore in Constantinopoli emptus a quodam Andronico Yneote*. The westerner who wrote this note and probably owned the manuscript was convinced about its Planoudean origin, wrongly though since the copy is later. The fact remains that Planoudes is called “monk of the Chora”. Against the identity of this Maximus and Planoudes, see Estangüí (2014).

<sup>15</sup> Kugéas (1909: 106–109); Turyn (1972: 29–30).

of Nonnos of Panopolis, *Paraphrase of the Gospel of St. John* (Marc. gr. Z. 481, f. 122v), in September 1299 (later, the year was changed to 1301/2, apparently by Planoudes himself).<sup>16</sup>

It is very clear from Planoudes' correspondence the leading role he played in Byzantine culture and literary circles: in many cases his letters are addressed to high-ranking figures of the court, some of them his former pupils.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, it is significant that Andronikos II should invite Planoudes to deliver a *basi-likos logos* (i.e. imperial oration) in honour of his son Michael IX, crowned heir to the throne on 21 May 1295.<sup>18</sup> The rebellion of the general Alexios Philanthropenos in Anatolia that same year<sup>19</sup> did not seem to have brought his friend Planoudes into disfavour, because shortly after December 1296 the latter travelled to Aquileia with the *orphanotrophos* Leo Bardales to apologise on behalf of the Emperor for the recent massacre of Venetians at the hands of Genoese in Constantinople.<sup>20</sup> Given all this, it is reasonable to conjecture that the various "literary enterprises" of Planoudes were undertaken under the patronage of a cultured, curious patron such as Andronikos II, as was the case with the production of Ptolemaic maps celebrated in several epigrams by Planoudes.<sup>21</sup>

As we know, *Moralia* is the comprehensive name by which we refer to a collection of Plutarchan texts that were never brought together in antiquity.<sup>22</sup> Not only are some of the *Moralia* not moral in nature, but also a considerable part of them is in fact historical in terms of theme.<sup>23</sup> The imposition of the – largely

<sup>16</sup> Turyń (1972: 90–96). The manuscript is also the Planoudean copy of his Epigrammatic Anthology. In Akataleptos was also found Monac. gr. 430 (Thucydides, tenth century), restored by Gregorios Kypros and annotated by Planoudes.

<sup>17</sup> Planoudes' letters were edited by Treu (1890) and Leone (1991); see now the study by Taxidis (2012). Contemporary to Planoudes, the only rival fostered at the front of the higher education was the *hypatos tōn philosophōn* Ioannes Pothos Pediasimos; on the rivalry between Pediasimos and Planoudes, cf. Pérez Martín (2010: 117–119).

<sup>18</sup> Edited by Westerink (1966–1968).

<sup>19</sup> Laiou (1978), Beyer (1993).

<sup>20</sup> On Planoudes' embassy to Aquileia, cf. Pachymeres IX 21 (III 269 Laurent – Failler), the only historical testimony about the scholar.

<sup>21</sup> See Taxidis (2017: 87–102).

<sup>22</sup> On the original format of Plutarch's works, see Irigoin (1992: 12–13) and Duff (2011). The title *Ēthika* appears in at least two of the *veteres* used by Planoudes: Vat. Barb. gr. 182 [G] (f. 2), and Mosq. Sin. 352 [501 Vlad.] [M] (f. 4ov). It was the order followed in *Mor.* 1–21 by M that was finally perpetuated by Planoudes, but this order is not shared by the majority of codices, nor by G, which has the 21 *logoi* (and others) in a different order. M may also have contained a larger collection of treatises, since the final part of it is mutilated.

<sup>23</sup> The moral teaching of history, a concept articulated in antiquity by Lucian, lends a profound unity to Plutarch's works. The *Moralia* includes not only works on historical matters,

unsuitable – name of *Moralia* on all of the works probably stemmed from the need to give an all-encompassing definition to the part of Plutarch's oeuvre beyond the corpus of *Parallel Lives*. But for Planoudes, *Ploutarchou ēthika* was a title strictly applicable to *Mor.* 1–21, shown in the list of Plutarch's works in Marc. gr. Z. 481 (f. 123r–v) as the “beginning” and “end of the *Moralia*” (*archē tōn ēthikōn* and *telos tōn ēthikōn*), respectively. The pinax of Vat. Barb. gr. 182 [G]<sup>24</sup> (f. 1r–v, added at the beginning of the fourteenth century) simply mentions *logoi* (f. 1: *pinax tōn logōn*, numbered 1–34) and only at the end (f. iv) does it say: “of these, the *Moralia* are 21” (*apo toutōn eisin hoi ēthikoi autou logoi ka*).<sup>25</sup>

Since the *Parallel Lives* were indeed organised into corpora of two and three volumes in late antiquity and in the ninth century,<sup>26</sup> Planoudes concentrated on locating the different partial corpora of the remaining works, and on identifying those whose text was the best and with the fewest gaps. Although his correspondence does not explicitly mention this search (only the search for parchment to copy them),<sup>27</sup> it cannot be ruled out that he used his network of acquaintances and students (particularly those based in Thessalonike) to look for copies of Plutarch outside Constantinople. Some credence has also been given to the possibility that Planoudes took advantage of his embassy to Italy to look for Greek codices;<sup>28</sup> this hypothesis has been justified by the existence of codices of Plutarch copied in the south of Italy, but in fact these codices, Vindob. phil. gr. 129 and Florence, Riccard. 45, do not originate from

but also the *Lives* of Galba and Otho (*Mor.* 25–26), the only surviving pieces of the *Lives of the Roman Emperors* (from Augustus to Vitellius) written by Plutarch. Their preservation among the non-biographical works is explained by their moral-ethical approach.

<sup>24</sup> The manuscript, from the tenth/eleventh century, is fully digitised and available on [https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Barb.gr.182](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Barb.gr.182) (last accessed 4 March 2019). Cf. Bianconi (2005: 415), Martinelli Tempesta (2006: 6–7).

<sup>25</sup> This precision can only be explained by the influence of Planoudes, who used G to correct other copies of *Moralia*. But when Manuel Chrysoloras included his bilingual ex-libris in G, he did so, of course, with the words *Ploutarchou ēthika / Plutarchi ethica*. And in the pinax of Marc. gr. Z. 250, added in the fourteenth century, all 29 of the treatises contained in the old volume are described as “moral”. The copyist of Marc. gr. Z. 248 (a. 1455), Ioannes Rhosos, entitled *Moralia* as *Ēthika, politika, physika kai pantodapa syngrammata*; cf. Garzya (1998: 16). As Irigoin insightfully pointed out (1987: CCLVI), Vindob. phil. gr. 46 (15th c.) contains within a longer series the sequence *Mor.* 3–19, 21, where the first treatise is preceded by the comment *tōn ēthikōn Ploutarchou* (f. 149v) and the last ends on f. 313v with the note *doxa soi o theos* indicating for the copyist the end of a part of his task.

<sup>26</sup> Irigoin (1982–83); Németh in this volume.

<sup>27</sup> A joint analysis of Planoudes' letters on his copy of Plutarch (epp. 78, 79, 95, 100, 106, 109) in Garzya (1988b: 41–5), where the year 1295 must be corrected; cf. now Pascale (2007: 55–59, 72–75 and n. 81), Rollo (2008), Taxidis (2012: 108–109).

<sup>28</sup> Irigoin (1987: CCCVI).

Calabria or Sicily.<sup>29</sup> Otranto is, however, the origin of the codex of Diogenes Laertius to which a list of Plutarch's works, known as the Lamprias catalogue (Neap. III.B.29, ff. 246v–247r),<sup>30</sup> was added in the fourteenth century. The list is preceded by an introduction in the form of a letter which is not an original composition, but which is inspired by a letter of Pliny. This translation into Greek (including a manipulation of the original) is an operation that might well have been done in the bilingual environment of Otranto in which the codex was copied.<sup>31</sup>

A second copy of the Lamprias catalogue, without the letter mentioned and, in fact, independent from the list in the Naples MS, was added to the oldest codex of Plutarch, Par. gr. 1678 [o], f. 148r–v.<sup>32</sup> The MS was the model for *Mor.* 58 in the Planoudean edition<sup>33</sup> and was no doubt used by Planoudes to complete, in his list of Plutarch's works in Marc. gr. Z. 481, f. 123r–v, those missing from the pinax of Par. gr. 1671.<sup>34</sup> MS o, a codex contemporary with Arethas, contains a small selection from the *Lives* and some treatises of the *Moralia* on political subjects. Although its mutilation prevents us from knowing all the texts it originally contained, judging from the works and its size it appears to have been conceived as an anthology. Such, too, is the Vat. Urb. gr. 97 [U], which, after being corrected, served as a model for *Mor.* 44–50 in Planoudes' edition.<sup>35</sup> Copied in Constantinople in the mid-tenth century, the fact that it was available to Gregorios Kyprios and Maximos Planoudes may suggest that this *vetus* was kept in Akataleptos.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Martinelli Tempesta (2006: 94–95), Lucà (2014: 162, n. 107).

<sup>30</sup> But the volume is from the first half of the twelfth century, according to Lucà (2014: 152); cf. Arnesano (2010: 76), with prior references. The most recent critical edition of the catalogue has been published by Irigoin (1987: CCCIII–CCCVIII).

<sup>31</sup> The interested reader can find the story in Sandbach (1966: 3–30), with an edition and translation of the list.

<sup>32</sup> The list is now hardly legible due to its deterioration. The MS is fully digitised and available online: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10722892j> (last accessed 4 March 2019).

<sup>33</sup> Rescigno (1992: 148); cf. Irigoin (1987: CCCIX and CCXLII).

<sup>34</sup> Irigoin (1986) and Irigoin (1987: CCCV).

<sup>35</sup> The selection does not have a specific profile; Irigoin (1987: CCXLIII), Frazier (2005: 84), Martinelli Tempesta (2013: 275). A contemporary codex, Palat. Heidelb. gr. 283 [H] (available online: <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/digit/cpgraec283>) (last accessed 4 March 2019) shows a very similar collection of *Lives* and *Moralia*.

<sup>36</sup> On the dating and the scribe, Perria (1977–79). Gregorios' handwriting may be perhaps identified in a note on f. 259v (“*ek tōn Aristophanous hippeōn*”), where the original text of Aristophanes (*Eq.* 50) helps to correct the Plutarchan citation in *Mor.* 46 (497B9–10). As for Planoudes, he may have corrected *Mor.* 49 on f. 269v. At the beginning of the fourteenth century, a scribe, whose handwriting would include him among the imperial

The various marginal notes found in the oldest codex devoted entirely to the *Moralia*, Vat. Barb. gr. 182 [G], prove that from the time it was copied it never ceased to be available to its readers, among whom was Planoudes. In April 1351 Nikephoros Gregoras wrote a brief private note on f. 391, which suggests that G was at that time in the Chora.<sup>37</sup> G was used by Planoudes to correct Mosq. Sin. 352 (501 Vlad.) [M], which must date from the second half of the eleventh century, and the corrected text of M was the source of *Mor.* 1–21 in the Planoudean edition. Elsewhere, a corpus of *Moralia* similar to that of G, that of Par. gr. 1957 [F], was also corrected by Planoudes and used as a source for *Mor.* 57 and 59.<sup>38</sup> The situation for the remaining treatises is more complicated. The source of *Mor.* 22–34 seems to have been a lost codex of which we still have two later copies (Vind. phil. gr. 46 and 36). The order of *Mor.* 51–69 is similar to that of FG and these manuscripts could have been used by Planoudes as models for several of these treatises.<sup>39</sup>

We have no certainty about the localisation of this exceptional number of models (Mss. GFMUo and other codices, now lost),<sup>40</sup> but the fact that Planoudes annotated and corrected them suggests that he did not simply have them on loan. It is perhaps not too far-fetched to think that he collected these materials in his workplace before immersing himself in his task as compiler and editor.<sup>41</sup> Fortunately, we have some references concerning the time-frame of his work. The story has been told many times,<sup>42</sup> although the traditional chronology has had to be brought forward slightly as a result of the new dating to 1293 of *Ep.* 106, in which Planoudes asks Philanthropenos for parchment to continue his copy of Plutarch.<sup>43</sup> In that year, Planoudes had already set in motion all the machinery of his school in order to obtain the rapid copying of an initial version of the newly-reunited corpus of *Mor.* 1–69. This initial version

notaries, wrote on f. 1b a pinax of the 3-volume edition of *Lives*. The same chancellery context, but an earlier one, is suggested by the handwritings of two additions on ff. 71v and 157v.

<sup>37</sup> Pérez Martín (2001: 402–403).

<sup>38</sup> Rescigno (1992), D'Angelo (1998: 59–63).

<sup>39</sup> Irigoin (1987: CCLXXVI–VIII).

<sup>40</sup> Such as the model of *Mor.* 22; cf. Vendruscolo (1994: 29).

<sup>41</sup> Probably, as we have already seen, the monastery of Akataleptos or of the Chora. Vat. gr. 138 and Laur. Plut. 69.6 are as well manuscripts of Plutarch's *Lives* annotated by Planoudes usually located at the imperial library during the Macedonian period; cf. Irigoin (1971), Manfredini (2000), Bianconi (2011), and Németh in this volume.

<sup>42</sup> See note 27 above.

<sup>43</sup> Beyer (1993: 116). In *Ep.* 100 (161.22–29 Leone) to Melchisedek, asks for two different sizes of bifolio, and it is traditionally thought that the smaller would refer to Ambros. C 126 inf. (480 x 330 mm) and the larger to Par. gr. 1671 (580 x 380 mm).

is Ambros. C 126 inf. ( $\alpha$ ), copied by Planoudes and a sizeable team of copyists once the chosen models had been corrected.<sup>44</sup> The transcription in  $\alpha$  was revised several times by Planoudes: he numbered the quires, filled the gaps in the margin introduced by the word *keimenon*, noted *graphetai* variants, no doubt a product of the collation, and even corrected some quotes from other authors by using codices of their works.

The resulting text was finally handed over to a copyist, who at the same time produced a copy of the *Lives* and of the *Mor.* 1–69 of  $\alpha$ , Par. gr. 1671 [A], finished on 11 July 1296, which is the *terminus ante quem* of the copy of  $\alpha$ .<sup>45</sup> In this version Planoudes continued to correct the copyist's errors, proposing improvements to the text with the remark "This is how I think it should be written."<sup>46</sup> But some gaps in the model texts proved to be insurmountable. Thus, the gap at the beginning of *Mor.* 38 is reflected both in  $\alpha$  and in A by a large blank space and with the note "*Platonic questions*, whose beginning was not found".<sup>47</sup> In other passages, Planoudes has given up the search for the full text but does not leave the blank space, as indicated by an interesting note he adds in the margin of *On the obsolescence of oracles* (Par. gr. 1671, f. 213; see Figure 17.1):

This passage is very obscure because the letters in the old copies are in many places worn away and do not yield continuous sense. I have seen an old copy in which there were many gaps, as if the scribe could not find what was missing and perhaps hoped to find it elsewhere. But here the

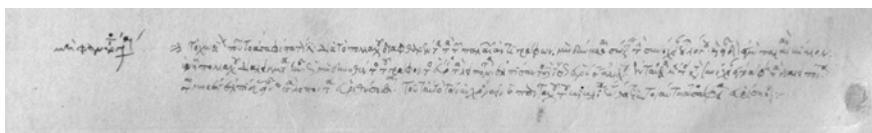


FIGURE 17.1 Par. gr. 1671B, f. 213r: inf. note by Maximos Planoudes  
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<sup>44</sup> Wegehaupt (1914–16), Turyn (1972: 81–87), who dated the first copy of the edition of Planoudes ( $\alpha$ ) to 1294–95 based on the old dating of the letters from Planoudes to Philanthropenos, not because the codex contains any subscription.

<sup>45</sup> Hoffmann (1983) and (1989). Once Par. gr. 1671 had been copied, Ambros. C 126 inf was more dispensable, and for this reason there has been speculation about its arrival in Italy at an early date, perhaps with Planoudes' embassy itself; cf. Stadter (1973), Vendruscolo (1994: 76), Rollo (2008: 104–106).

<sup>46</sup> *Houtōs oimai dein graphesthai*, sometimes in a simplified way *oimai*; cf. Garzya (1988b: 48); for example, in A (f. 54v) and  $\alpha$  (f. 107r).

<sup>47</sup> *Platōnika zētēmata hōn ouch heurethē ē archē*; cf. Irigoin (1987: CCLXXVII).

text is written continuously because there is no longer any hope of finding the missing words. This fact must therefore be noted throughout the volume where any such obscurity occurs.<sup>48</sup>

And the final touch to so much work and to so much searching is found in the list of Plutarch's works in Marc. gr. Z. 481 where, after the pinax of Par. gr. 1671, Planoudes writes: "These are all [the treatises] that were found" (*tauta panta heurethēsan*). Yet Planoudes had perhaps one final satisfaction: the copyist of A produced a second copy of the "tutto Plutarco" (Vat. gr. 139 of *Mor.* + Par. gr. 1674 of *Lives*),<sup>49</sup> in which immediately after *Mor.* 69 and with no type of interruption (ff. 516r–60iv) *Mor.* 78 was included, thanks to the fact that after 1296 Vindob. phil. gr. 148 [T], the model for the whole tradition, was found.<sup>50</sup>

Fortunately, the story of the text of the *Moralia* does not end there. An even more complete copy of the Planoudean corpus is Par. gr. 1672 [E], which adds *Mor.* 70–77, perhaps found in the same model that enabled the completion of *Mor.* 38, the other novelty in the text of E.<sup>51</sup> The manuscript was undoubtedly copied in the monastery of Chora, using codex A for *Mor.* 1–69.<sup>52</sup> This can be deduced, logically, from the collation of the text, but also from two curious details. In the margins of E the Planoudean note "I think" (*oimai*) in αA becomes "Maximos Planoudes thinks this ..." (*o kyrios Maximos o Planoudēs hōs oietai* ...). Furthermore, in the upper margin of f. 606 (see Figure 17.2), the copyist of the text has transcribed the same note mentioned in αA pointing out the absence of the beginning of *Mor.* 38, but has actually copied the beginning and crossed out the note.<sup>53</sup> This may have been due to a distraction on the part of

<sup>48</sup> Translation by Wilson (1996: 236), ed. by Paton/Wegehaupt/Pohlenz (1974: xi, n. 2) and by Garzya (1988b: 43).

<sup>49</sup> He may have done it before Planoudes' death. The manuscript is considered a copy of A post correctionem in *Mor.* 1–69: Vendruscolo (1994: 31), Martinelli Tempesta (2006: 127). Vendruscolo (1993) identified the owner of Vat. gr. 139 with Ioannes Synadenos; cf. Martinelli Tempesta (2005: 378–379). On Synadenos, *PLP* 27125.

<sup>50</sup> Garzya (1988a: 34), Irigoin (1987: CCLIIII), Irigoin (1992: 24–26). In turn, Books 1–4 of T's model would have suffered damages when it was made of papyrus volumina.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Sandbach (1941). On the transmission of *Mor.* 70–76, Manfredini (1988), Irigoin (1987: CCLXXXIV–VI, CCLXXXII), Martinelli Tempesta (2013: 275–6). The manuscript is fully digitised and available online: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10723269h> (last accessed 4 March 2019). Soon after the discovery, a historical codex (basically Appian) belonging to the Chora, Laur. Plut. 70.5, already presents *Mor.* 77 on ff. 220–226v; cf. Clérigues (2007).

<sup>52</sup> Nikephoros Gregoras annotated the manuscripts, whose two scribes collaborated with him in many other books; cf. Bianconi (2005: 414–415), with prior references; Martinelli Tempesta (2006: 72–76).

<sup>53</sup> Irigoin (1987: CCLXXXI–II).

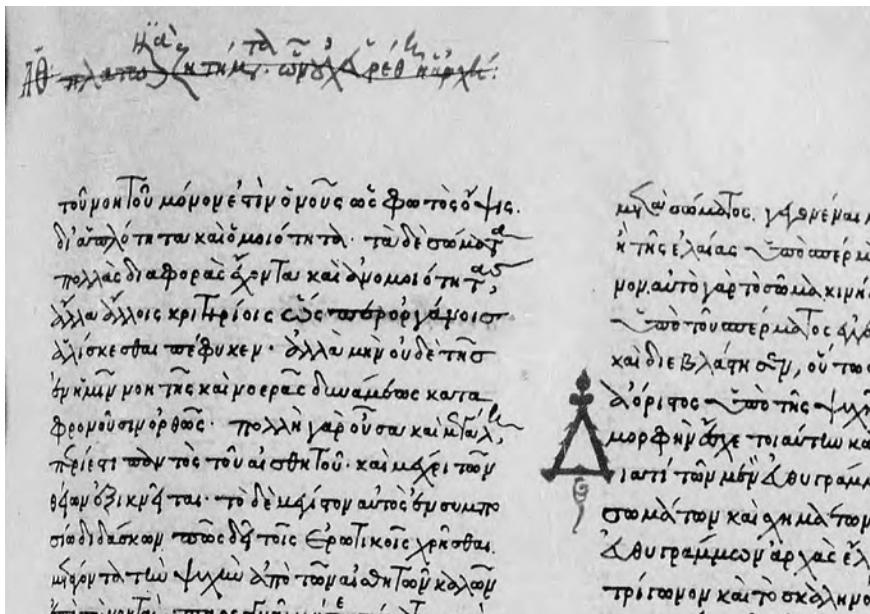


FIGURE 17.2 Par. gr. 1672, f. 60r: note crossed out by scribe G

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the copyist, or to the fact that those responsible for the copy realised at the last minute that they could recover the missing text.

There can be no doubt that the work of Planoudes on Plutarch, as in the case of other authors, led to a proliferation of partial copies.<sup>54</sup> But this definitive corpus of *Moralia* was reproduced less frequently than we might think,<sup>55</sup> and the reason is easy to find. At the end of MS E, on ff. 876r–936r, Manuel Tzykandiles added *Mor. 78* before 1362, the moment when in Mistras this same scribe again copied the whole Paris MS in Lond. Canon. 93 + Ambros. D 538 inf. (cat. 1000).<sup>56</sup> This is a very revealing final act of the constitution of the corpus of *Moralia*: coinciding with the death of Gregoras (end of 1358–end of 1361),<sup>57</sup> the most complete manuscript of Plutarch had already left the library of Chora and was to be found in the heart of the Peloponnese. Tzykandiles

54 On the transmission of the Planoudean edition, Vendruscolo (1994: 76–85). On the textual family Θ, in part dependent on the Planoudean text, Vendruscolo (1992).

55 Par. gr. 1675 (B de *Moralia*), copied by Isidoros of Kiev around 1430, reproduces a selection of treatises in an order other than Planoudes and at the same time copies *Mor. 70–77* from E; cf. Irigoin (1987: CCLXXV–VI).

56 Manfredini (1989: 130–131).

57 Beyer (1978: 153–155).

appears never to have collaborated in the copying of books in the Chora, but he did work for Emperor Ioannes VI Kantakouzenos, who was in Mistras from 1361/1362 to 1367.<sup>58</sup> A great friend of Gregoras and, from 1347, his opponent in the Hesychast controversy, Kantakouzenos may have been one of those responsible for the dispersion of the Chora library after the death of Gregoras. As for the latter, it was he who, once again, completed the rescue of the works of Plutarch initiated by Planoudes.

## Conclusion

In this chapter we have tried to provide an overview of the transmission of *Moralia* from the point of view of the Byzantine scholars involved in it. By identifying their hands and studying the notes they added in Plutarchan manuscripts or the letters they wrote, modern scholars are able to write a history of the text that is also a history of the Byzantine culture. Before the Palaiologan period, the transmission of the Plutarchan writings outside the corpus of *Parallel lives* was fragmentary and of unequal quality. Or so was at least the state of the preserved texts when Maximos Planoudes got involved in gathering and correcting them (from 1293 to 1296). A corpus of 69 treatises was then created and hereafter expanded to the number of 78 we preserve nowadays. This last version of the *Moralia*'s corpus was produced in the monastery of Chora, where probably Planoudes' legacy, the books he recovered or wrote, was kept.

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58 Mondrain (2004: 251–258).

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# Plutarch and Theodore Metochites

*Sophia Xenophontos*

## 1 Introduction

This chapter aims to contribute to the broader topic of Plutarch's revival in Byzantium, complementing and to some extent setting up a dialogue with the other chapters included in Part 2 of this volume. Specifically, it sets out to explore Plutarch's influence on the key late Byzantine intellectual Theodore Metochites (1270–1332). Despite the political and financial crisis that was troubling the Byzantine Empire in the last centuries before its fall to the Ottomans (1453), the early Palaiologan period (1261–1341) was an age of unprecedented revival of the classical tradition,<sup>1</sup> marked by the production of an astonishing number of editions and paraphrases of ancient works.<sup>2</sup> It is within this learned milieu that we must view the life and activity of Theodore Metochites, a prolific author writing in different genres: he composed commentaries on Aristotle, twenty poems on various subjects, eighteen orations, a three-part introduction to Ptolemaic astronomy entitled *Elements of astronomy* (*Stoicheiōsis astronomikē*), a collection of letters (the overwhelming majority now lost) and a miscellanistic work of significant interest, the *Miscellanea* (*Semeiōseis gnōmikai*). In addition to being a man of letters, Metochites was also a pre-eminent politician, whose close association with the Emperor Andronikos II (r. 1282–1328) probably accounts for his being appointed to one of the most highly distinguished posts he ever assumed, that of *megas logothetēs* (a kind of prime minister).<sup>3</sup> This contribution will focus on Metochites' dedicated

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\* English translations and transliterations of Byzantine proper names and places follow the conventions of the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (*ODB*, ed. A. Kazhdan, 3 vols, New York – Oxford 1991). Dates are also taken from *ODB*. The material presented here is an abridged and slightly altered version of my chapter Xenophontos (2018).

- 1 For a detailed treatment of the political history of this period, see Nicol (1972: 39–167) and Laiou (1972); cf. Angelov (2006). For a concise discussion, see Runciman (1970: 1–48).
- 2 Wilson (1996).
- 3 On Metochites' life and work, see Beck (1952), Ševčenko (1962), Ševčenko (1975: 17–91), Ševčenko (1979), de Vries/van der Velden (1987) (although one should be careful with regard to this author's subjectivity in treating Metochites), Hinterberger (2001).

treatment of Plutarch's intellectual value in Essay 71 of the *Semeiōseis gnōmikai*, entitled *On Plutarch*.

## 2 Metochites' *Semeiōseis gnōmikai* and Plutarch's *Moralia*: Twin Projects?

The *Semeiōseis gnōmikai* is the product of Metochites' mature period as an author, published sometime between May 1321 and May 1328.<sup>4</sup> The work is informed by the political calamities of the Byzantine state as well as the cultural anguish of the time and the personal constraints on Metochites' own life and career. It comprises 120 essays deriving useful material from physics, logic, history, politics, religion, and ethics. This thematic compilation is an example of Byzantine scholars' fondness for encyclopaedism and wide learning. In terms of structure the essays in this series follow no systematic principles of composition. Although some scholars have seen the *Semeiōseis* as a counterpart to Photios' *Bibliotheca* (ninth century), Michael Psellos' *On knowledge of all sorts (De omnifaria doctrina)* (eleventh century), or John Tzetzes' *Chiliads* (twelfth century), its thematic and structural features warrant coupling it with Plutarch's *Moralia* instead. The *Moralia* too is a collective project, addressing a wide range of philosophical, scientific, and other topics. It too includes essays, which for the most part are only loosely connected with one another. The author's working technique features the frequent use of quotations drawn from a variety of classical authorities. Finally, the encyclopaedic nature of the project was meant to appeal to an educated elite and to offer its readers an ethical payoff. But how did the *Moralia* become a literary model for the *Semeiōseis* and why is it so important?

In order to respond properly to this question, we need to turn to the textual transmission of Plutarch in earlier periods. From the third and fourth centuries up to the seventh Plutarch was especially popular among Christian writers due to his high moral tone, which was in line with the spirit of the Gospels (see, e.g. Avdokhin and Morlet in this volume). At the same time, he was also famous in rhetorical circles in late antiquity because of his peculiar style and diction. This popularity was mainly based on the *Parallel lives*, not the *Moralia*, which

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<sup>4</sup> The *Semeiōseis gnōmikai* has been critically edited in part by Hult (2002) and Agapitos *et al.* (1996). The entire project of the *Semeiōseis gnōmikai* is available in the edition by Müller and Kiesling (1821). Other editions of the *Semeiōseis gnōmikai* appeared recently (by K. Hult and S. Wahlgren), but they reached me too late for me to take full advantage of them. On the date of the *Semeiōseis gnōmikai*, see Hult (2002: xiv).

for many centuries circulated as separate treatises, or, at best, as groups of treatises, but certainly not as a self-contained project. Things changed radically in the last decade of the thirteenth century, when Maximos Planoudes (c. 1255–c. 1305), a significant scholar, courtier, and monk, brought together the miscellaneous treatises that now form Plutarch's *Ēthika (Moralia)*, a label attached by Planoudes himself. With the help of various students, he launched a serious editorial operation, collating various pre-existing manuscripts, meticulously transcribing them, and eventually publishing the *Moralia* in two main codices, the Ambrosianus 859 (C 126 inf.) and Parisinus Graecus 1671, as discussed by Pérez Martín in this volume.<sup>5</sup> There is sufficient evidence to suggest that Metochites had easy access to the recent Planoudean editions of the *Moralia*, which he could not possibly have come across as a whole otherwise.

Like Planoudes, who famously wrote of Plutarch to a close friend: "I love this man so very much",<sup>6</sup> Metochites too was fascinated with the philosopher of Chaeronea. In fact, he went as far as to consider Plutarch a reflection of his own self. According to Nikephoros Gregoras (c. 1290/1291–1358–1361), Metochites' favourite student and protégé, the soul of Plutarch was incarnated in Metochites (Gregoras, *Ep. 24α*, 83.41–42, *Hist. X.2.475–480*), forming a crucial part of his mental identity.

The most obvious reflection of this is seen in Metochites' decision to dedicate a whole essay of the *Semeiōseis gnōmikai* exclusively to Plutarch (no. 71), and to distinguish it from his other five essays dealing with ancient authors, *i.e.* *On Xenophon*, *On Dio of Prusa*, *On Philo*, *On Josephus*, and *On Synesios* in the following respects:<sup>7</sup> a) it is much more extensive, covering twelve printed pages in Hult's edition compared to three or four pages on average in the other cases; b) it is an all-encompassing evaluation of Plutarch's intellectual role, whereas in the other essays the authors are judged mostly in terms of their relationship with rhetoric; c) Plutarch's essay is entirely concerned with him, whilst the subjects of the other five essays are compared and contrasted with contemporaries or predecessors and judged inferior to them; d) Plutarch receives a magnificent encomium bordering on hagiography, unlike the treatments of the other authors which are judgmental notes on their cultural contributions; and e) *On Plutarch* occupies a peculiar position in the *Semeiōseis gnōmikai*, as it is set apart from the other five essays, located roughly at the centre of the collection. These differences are too systematic to be casual and they suggest that

<sup>5</sup> On Planoudes' editing skills, see Wilson (1996: 235–236). On the two codices, Constantinidis (1982: 74–75), Manfredini (1992), Pérez Martín (1997), Garzya (1998: 17–18), Bianconi (2011: 113–130).

<sup>6</sup> To Alexios Philanthropenos (dated early in 1295), *Ep. 106*, ll.35–36, ed. Leone (1991). On the relationship between the two men, see Laiou (1977).

<sup>7</sup> de Vries-van der Velden (1987: 185–197). See also Hult (2004: 44–56).

the essay *On Plutarch* must serve aims other than literary criticism or cultural analysis. In my reading *On Plutarch* becomes a unique medium through which we can explore what sort of image of himself Metochites wanted to project to his intended audience, helping us to cast light on the peculiarities of intellectual life and culture in late Byzantine Constantinople.<sup>8</sup>

### 3 Self-Presentation and Self-Awareness in Essay 71 *On Plutarch*

In the first chapter of Essay 71, Metochites explains that he had chosen to write about Plutarch, because he was attracted by the author's abundant wisdom (*Sem.* 71.1.1). He adds that, since he cannot possibly use everything that Plutarch said, he will need to "pick out and adopt" only some items "as from a great store" (*Sem.* 71.1.1–2).<sup>9</sup> This terminology echoes either the Planoudean editions that Metochites had recently consulted or his own rich library that he had at his disposal at the time of composition.<sup>10</sup> Whatever the case, it is clear that in early Palaiologan Byzantium Plutarch's works must have engaged much scholarly interest, appealing in particular to the predilection for diversity and careful selection from an extensive platform of classical knowledge among the Byzantine *literati*.

This Byzantine evaluation of Plutarch is apt, because the latter's eclecticism with regard to the collection and citation of material is one of the standard characteristics of his working method in the *Lives* and more especially the *Moralia*. Take, for example, the vast quantity of quotations that Plutarch drew from his *hypomnēmata*, personal notes made to assist his memory.<sup>11</sup> One might recall the often cited beginning of his *On tranquillity of mind* (464F): "I gathered together from my notebooks those observations ... which I happened (*etynchanon*) to have made for my own use" (cf. 328A). Plutarch's insertion of the verb *etynchanon* is meant to refer to the process of casual selection of his material, but, of course, one may doubt how casual it really was, given the author's diligence in excerpting from his sources. Nevertheless, it is striking

<sup>8</sup> Although some studies have dealt with Plutarch's revival in Byzantium, e.g. Garzya (1998), these are restricted to scanning Byzantine literature for Plutarchan passages or discussing the manuscript tradition of Plutarch's works. An interpretative analysis of Plutarch's dynamic presence in late Byzantium is still needed and we hope that Part 2 of this volume will provide a good starting point in this respect.

<sup>9</sup> All translations of the *Semeiōseis* are taken from Hult (2002), occasionally with minor alterations.

<sup>10</sup> Hult (2002: 219, n. 2). For an extensive treatment of Metochites' library, see Ševčenko (1951).

<sup>11</sup> See Van der Stockt (1999), Xenophontos (2012).

that, with reference to Plutarch's "casual" selectivity, Metochites argues in an analogous fashion that it was by chance that the idea of writing about Plutarch occurred to him (*Sem.* 71.1.2). Finally, Metochites' frequent use of expressions such as "I will talk about these topics as they occur to me" (*Sem.* 19.2.1) gives a sense of spontaneity, which is again very common in the miscellanists of Plutarch's time, who were heavily dependent on memory or notes in the process of composition (and Metochites seems to be well aware of that in *Sem.* 71.10.1). We can therefore conclude that certain features of Plutarch's essay writing had contemporary application in Metochites' own miscellanistic project and the way he worked on it.

Metochites praises Plutarch's natural talent in every branch of wisdom, a view that he accompanies with the (self-referential) aside: "as anyone who studies him carefully can understand and conclude" (*Sem.* 71.2.1). He then proceeds to classify people into two categories with regard to human talent: some are naturally suited to subjects of great importance, whereas others are suited to more lowly subjects. For Metochites Plutarch is the very model of a man who is naturally at home with everything he likes of the important parts of education, a sophisticated reference to himself; Metochites was compared to a *homo universalis*<sup>12</sup> and Nikephoros Gregoras admired him particularly for his wide-ranging education. In one of Gregoras' letters to Metochites (*Letter* 24a, 15–17) we read: "We would indeed be speaking quite truthfully if we were to call you a rhetorical, a poetical, an astronomical man, and in addition a political, a practical, an advice-giving one".<sup>13</sup>

In Metochites' exposition, however, Plutarch's image begins to be distorted, acquiring characteristics that might not square with his real identity, yet fit Metochites' calculated self-profile nicely. Plutarch is depicted as a man who "is insatiable in everything and greedy to acquire every kind of learning" (*aplestia*, *Sem.* 71.2.4), he also is desirous of becoming rich in all the highest things (using the term *philoploutia*, *Sem.* 71.2.4). The references to greed and love of wealth may echo Metochites' own obsession with money, as he was considered the richest man in Constantinople and accused on many occasions – especially by his political and intellectual rival Nikephoros Choumnos (c. 1250/1255–1327) – of avarice, self-obsession, and overly self-indulgent tastes. By inventing the concept of intellectual (rather than materialistic) *philoploutia* and projecting it as a fine quality, Metochites may be shielding himself behind the

<sup>12</sup> Bazzani (2006).

<sup>13</sup> All the letters that Gregoras addressed to Metochites date before 1328, and given that the overlaps with the essay *On Plutarch* are meant to appeal to Metochites, the essay *On Plutarch* must have been composed before Gregoras' *Letters*; edited by Leone (1982–1983).

indisputably unassailable persona of the ancient biographer, whom any cultured Palaiologan scholar would have admired and revered. The constructed concept of intellectual avarice, which will be a recurrent theme, as we shall see, hints at the darker sides of Metochites' personality.

Metochites' apology to his enemies becomes even more pointed as the essay proceeds. Although still speaking in general terms, he speaks out against those men who have a high estimation of their work and demand that all people admire them, criticisms directly applicable to Nikephoros Choumnos.<sup>14</sup> These men, Metochites goes on, act in this way, for three reasons: either because they are weak by nature (he himself and Plutarch have already been described as equipped with natural talent); or because they are content with little (in contrast to Plutarch's and Metochites' intellectual *philoploutia*); or finally because they "perform" (i.e. are actively engaged) in only a few areas of the intellect (whereas Plutarch and Metochites have already been established as lovers of a wide-ranging wisdom) (*Sem.* 71.2.3–6). The mention of performance in only a few subjects is specially revealing, because Metochites used to reproach Choumnos for being ignorant of astronomy and mathematics, areas in which he himself excelled.

After discussing the ancient author's close bond with ethics (*Sem.* 71.3.1), Metochites is keen to emphasise that, though the natural sciences and mathematics might have been of secondary importance to Plutarch, yet they were not completely absent from his scholarly agenda (*Sem.* 71.3.3). In fact, as Metochites suggests, Plutarch had to be aware of these branches of knowledge, in order to polemicise against the Stoics and refute their contradictions in natural philosophy (*Sem.* 71.3.4). Such an interpretation might seem too simplistic to modern tastes, but Metochites' need to defend Plutarch's acquaintance with natural philosophy and mathematics derives from his wider agenda in this essay: if Plutarch was going to function as a persona for him, he needed to show that the latter had at least a fundamental background in that area of study in which he himself shone so brilliantly and that this background had enabled Plutarch to compete with other cultured men. We need only recall that Metochites was immensely proud of his contribution to astronomy, which in that period was considered a divine science and an area of intellectual contention among scholars, including the Emperor Andronikos II himself.

In his attempt to merge self-image and model, Metochites goes as far as to say that "Plutarch wrote several carefully elaborated books on physical problems, and in many places in his works he ... gives his opinions on mathematical problems, an indication that he has studied them a great deal" (*Sem.* 71.3.6).

<sup>14</sup> With Tartaglia (1987: 347–348).

Moreover, he concludes that Plutarch “is qualified to enter into discussion with the leading and the most illustrious mathematicians among his predecessors, making references to Pythagoras and his followers, Euclid, Plato, Hipparchus, Archimedes, and all those who belong to their entourage and following” (*Sem.* 71.3.7). True, one can refer to Plutarch’s arithmetical, geometrical, and astronomical discussions in his *On the first cold*, *Natural questions*, or *On Isis and Osiris*, but Metochites shows his partiality, given Plutarch’s actual scientific contribution and the limited extent of his mathematical engagement across his corpus. In recapitulating his evaluation of Plutarch (and of himself) he writes: “In general, concerning every branch of philosophy, he is eager for knowledge and highly talented, showing himself to be in possession of vast resources and inner treasures of wisdom” (*Sem.* 71.3.8). The terminology of wealth implies self-reference, an implication that is immediately confirmed by the almost naive view that Plutarch “would have been greatly distressed and angry if someone had deprived him of these things … and would have been most offended and considered that they had deprived him of the greatest part of his wide-ranging learning” (*Sem.* 71.3.9). Such lively psychological capital must be taken to reflect Metochites’ own feelings in response to the criticisms of his contemporaries. Similarly, his targeted reconfiguring of Plutarch must be seen as his way of defending himself against his opponents.

Metochites then furnishes Plutarch’s profile with invented traits, which facilitate the process of identification. Plutarch is thereafter described as “extremely ambitious (*philotimatos*) concerning every kind of knowledge, wide-ranging learning, and memory, more so than any other wise man from time immemorial” (*Sem.* 71.4.1). These statements sound a bit repetitive but once again a feature of Metochites’ personality that contemporary readers might question, namely his ambition, is purged of any culpability, when Metochites attributes the same characteristic to Plutarch and has it acquire a positive meaning. In a similar vein, in *Letter 24a* Gregoras vindicates Metochites’ *philotimia*, which has ensured him glory and the emperor’s benevolence.<sup>15</sup> Metochites’ evaluations of Plutarch’s memory reach the limits of hyperbole when we read that “he shows that he has memorised everything that has been written by anybody within the field of wisdom before his time in every subject – in truth, everything done

<sup>15</sup> *Letter 24a*, p. 65, ll. 72–81: “Just as the soul enables the body to live, in a similar vein one could say that *philotimia* enables the soul to live and to put it briefly it becomes the soul of the soul. The more *philotimia* becomes stronger and greater ..., the more it increases the glory of its possessor – which is what happened with you. For, competing and seeking for glory ... you have captured the benevolence of the king (i.e. emperor), and more importantly the king has much increased your honours and compliments” (my own translation).

by practically everybody ... in both human things and divine" (*Sem.* 71.4.2). The reference to the combination of religious and secular studies ("inner" and "outer learning") has a contemporary resonance of special importance in this context, as it is a Byzantine feature that Metochites elegantly introduces into Plutarch's profile. On the other hand, his insistence on Plutarch's extraordinary memory is consistent with Gregoras' flattering praise of Metochites' own powers of memory: "those who conversed with him (i.e. Metochites) had no need of books, for he was a living library and a ready abundance of queries";<sup>16</sup> it also reflects Metochites' similar self-evaluation: in his Poem XIII, line 246 (Polemis 233) with reference to his *Semeiōseis gnōmikai*, Metochites calls his mind "some capacious treasury" (*tameiou tou polychandeos*). The issue of the power of memory was a central concern for Byzantine scholars, associated as it was with both their profound educational background in classical learning and the way they practised their memorising skills from the early stages of education.

Metochites is then inspired by the philosopher's impartiality considering him an Olympic judge – *Hellanodikēs* (*Sem.* 4.6) – and a critical viewer of the philosophical games. To his mind this fair judgement is the main feature characterising Plutarch's opposition to Epicurean arrogance and amorality (*Sem.* 71.5.1). Metochites is again at work, emphasising Plutarch's justice, in order to reply to all those contemporaries who thought of him (Metochites) as unjustly granting personal favours and being susceptible to bribery. This anxiety is manifested a few lines below in the same text when he says that he loves Plutarch because he "prefers not to view people as friends or enemies depending on whether they bring advantage or disadvantage, and form judgements under the influence of attachments, but rather decides in the same way in each case whether there is some truth in it" (*Sem.* 71.6.7).

On the other hand, the focus on this term might have another contextual implication. I see it as no coincidence that, in praising Metochites' universal learning, Gregoras calls him a "universal Olympic judge" (*pankosmios Hellanodikēs*), who conspicuously oversees and possesses every sort of knowledge (in *Letter* 23, 64–73 addressed directly to Metochites and in *Letter* 22, 74–94 addressed to Joseph the Philosopher with reference to Metochites). The use of the term *Hellanodikēs* does not relate to justice on this occasion, but it is important that Gregoras adopted vocabulary that would have been familiar and appealing to his teacher, since this seems to have been a title commonly assigned to Metochites, reflecting his acute mind that enabled him to comment on all areas of the intellect. In addition to this, *Hellanodikai* were traditionally

<sup>16</sup> Gregoras, *Historia Byzantina*, ed. Schopen and Bekker (1829–1855), vol. I, p. 272, ll. 3–4.

magistracies of high esteem, men who not only presided over the games but also exercised disciplinary authority over the athletes, so that their role was both imposing and far-reaching. Late Byzantine authors such as Maximos Planoudes<sup>17</sup> and Nikephoros Gregoras<sup>18</sup> use the term in a very positive light to denote someone possessing political power and public authority, and worthy of honours, all qualities that Metochites attributed to himself when conceptualising his public image.<sup>19</sup>

In any case, Metochites considers Plutarch a teacher of virtue and propriety in life (*Sem.* 71.5.2) and also a man with absolute reverence for the divine. As a priest of Apollo at Delphi, Plutarch was indeed a pious man, but Metochites goes much further when he filters this feature through his current experiences, making it appeal to his Christian audience. He suggests that Plutarch attacked the Epicureans because they rejected religious practices and faith in the divine, and influenced people to act with impropriety regarding religion and virtue. Although these may be points addressed here and there by Plutarch in his anti-Epicurean essays (*It is not possible even to live pleasantly according to Epicurus* 1086D–1087A, cf. *On god's slowness to punish* 548B–C), he certainly had more profound reasons to reject Epicureanism. For instance, he opposed the Epicureans' denial of emotions (*ataraxia*), their abstinence from public engagement, and their devotion to bodily pleasures rather than intellectual pursuits and care of the soul. In addition to seeing Plutarch as dismissing Epicurean impiety, Metochites also considers Epicureans completely alien to philosophy and "resembling Sardanapalus" (*Sem.* 71.5.5), an expression that Plutarch uses of them in 1095D of his *It is not possible even to live pleasantly according to Epicurus*. The way Metochites associates religious veneration with philosophical engagement may have something to do with the increasing tendency in Byzantium to ease the tension between religion and philosophy, and give Platonic and Aristotelian interpretations to Christian teachings. On another level, Metochites personally believed that devotion to Christian Orthodoxy was a necessary requirement of education and culture, as he makes clear in his *On morals or concerning education* (ch. 6–9).

Metochites goes on to argue that Plutarch "might be compared to people who are extremely wealthy and enjoy vast riches" (*Sem.* 71.7.8), to people who

<sup>17</sup> *Encomium sancti Diomedis*, 46, ll. 16–18, ed. Westerink (1966).

<sup>18</sup> *Encomium in Michaelem Syncellum*, p. 276, ll. 10–12, ed. Schmitt (1906).

<sup>19</sup> Note that Metochites himself uses the term *Hellanodikēs* in his eulogy of Andronikos II in *Stoicheiōsis astronomikē* 1.18, 316 within the wider context of discussing the emperor's benevolence. The *Stoicheiōsis astronomikē* predates the *Semeiōseis gnōmikai* and it is highly probable that Gregoras was aware of the public connotations that Metochites attributed to this term. For the term *Hellanodikēs* in Palaiologan Byzantium, see Xenophontos (2015).

have stores from which to take anything (expressed with the verb *tamieuontai*, *Sem.* 71.7.8), and that Plutarch's mind is a treasure-house of memory (*tēs mnēmēs tameiois*, *Sem.* 71.8.1) and a tablet of imagination (*Sem.* 71.8.1). A few lines below he once again calls him "a complete treasure-house of the whole of history and knowledge" (*pankosmion ... tameion*) and "a market place of wisdom" (*agora ... tēs sophias*, *Sem.* 71.8.7). He concludes by arguing along similar lines that Plutarch's "wealth of wisdom" (*ousia tēs sophias*) is extraordinary and that he is most "generous with the riches of his thought" (*philotimos ... peri ton tēs dianoias plouton*, *Sem.* 71.8.8).<sup>20</sup> I have been quite analytical with regard to the terminology that Metochites uses in his encomium of Plutarch because interestingly this is the same vocabulary that Gregoras uses in his *Letter 23* when praising Metochites and his work; in lines 82–85 he says that the *Semeiōseis gnōmikai* is a "complete treasury of every kind of enquiry and learning and like some market-place of wisdom easily satisfying anybody's choice and every possible need".<sup>21</sup> This is conclusive evidence that Metochites wished to present himself as a Byzantine Plutarch in certain respects and that he expected others to treat him as such.<sup>22</sup>

Metochites ends this section of his *On Plutarch* by saying that one could either read all the books written before Plutarch's time or just Plutarch's work, which so successfully summarises the highest achievements of ancient wisdom. In fact, he opts for the latter, considering his *Semeiōseis gnōmikai* a counterpart to Plutarch's *Moralia* both in function and purpose. Gregoras similarly compared the *Semeiōseis* to the *Moralia* in his *Letter 23* sent to Metochites, expecting him to enjoy such comparisons. In lines 79–120 of the *Letter* it is easy to discern the excessive flattery of Metochites, but also the features that Gregoras attributes to Metochites through the model of Plutarch, which he must have gathered from Metochites' essay. Metochites' self-fashioning as an incarnation of Plutarch must then be understood as a reflection of what Metochites wanted his contemporaries to assume about his scholarly self.

I also want to pause briefly on the notion of the "image" (*pinax*) of the mind and imagination that Metochites employed above with reference to Plutarch. In his autobiographical Poem XII, full of pride and arrogance, he talks of his *Semeiōseis* as follows: "This book is, perhaps, a witness to the strength of my intelligence and of my vast erudition – may *Adrasteia* keep away (= touch wood)!" (250–251, *Polemis* 234) and, some lines below, "I have left this book as a picture

<sup>20</sup> A similar register may be found in Essay 111 of the *Semeiōseis Gnōmikai* (Müller and Kiessling 740–741).

<sup>21</sup> Tartaglia (1987: 340 and n. 5).

<sup>22</sup> Guillard (1927: 64, n. 2).

of my mind, or perhaps a statue ['*pinaka nouos isōs andrianta'*]" (257–258, Polemis 234). Here we find arresting affinities with the way Gregoras flatters Metochites with reference to precisely these qualities. Tellingly, in his Poem IV, 15–23 (Polemis 85), in which Metochites appoints Gregoras his intellectual heir and the protector of his literary legacy, he himself speaks of Gregoras in the same way, but only to sketch him as a very fine and obedient student, a successful reflection of himself: "I mean you, O best of friends. Wherefore have I taken great care of you, and have set you forth now and forever as a splendid and faithful and conspicuous image of my wisdom, that you may display my works to all those whose hearts greatly crave learning".<sup>23</sup> The overlap of vocabulary employed by Metochites and Gregoras respectively suggests that Metochites wished to ornament his intellectual image with Plutarchan characteristics; this wish had a direct influence on Gregoras, who, as the first reader of the *Semeiōseis*, establishes the tone of personal communication that would determine the relationship between the two men from then onwards, as can be seen in the letters they exchanged.

#### 4 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on Plutarch's reception by the late Byzantine scholar and statesman Theodore Metochites in the light of Essay 71 *On Plutarch*, and has attempted to show that Plutarch's own characteristics challenged and deeply informed Metochites' self-image. This essay is not just a literary biography of Plutarch, but an allusive autobiography of Metochites, a kind of indirect apology for himself. In it Metochites attributes genuine Plutarchan traits to himself that correspond to reality, but at the same time he leaves room for cleverer transformations of Plutarch's persona, in order to accommodate them to his own profile. In lauding Plutarch's wide-ranging learning, powerful memory, and ethical capital *inter alia*, Metochites was pleading his own case, providing his intellectual image with authority and shielding himself from his enemies.

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<sup>23</sup> Trans. Ševčenko and Featherstone (1981).

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# Plutarch's Reception in the Work of Nikephoros Xanthopoulos

*Stephanos Efthymiadis*

## 1 Introduction

The increased interest in Greek letters, rhetoric and culture in the early Palaiologan era (1261–1341) is manifest in the writings of a long series of contemporary *literati* integrated into different social groupings and working milieus. The term “Palaiologan Renaissance”, that has long been applied to this cultural phenomenon, implies a determined enthusiasm for what has been called “outer learning”, i.e. the study, copying and production of works of a secular orientation.<sup>1</sup> Its prominent spokesmen were, in principle, lay intellectuals with a declared attraction to Greek philosophy and scientific inquiry. Yet, given that in this period secular education was a common endowment for the social elite, this renaissance encompassed scholars who were churchmen, lavishing their energy and skills on the production of works of a chiefly religious character.<sup>2</sup> In the period preceding the rise of Hesychasm (c. 1330) the most notable among learned ecclesiastics was no doubt Nikephoros Xanthopoulos (d. c. 1335). In the history of Palaiologan letters he stands out as a versatile author whose extant oeuvre demonstrates a wide range of literary interests, fleshed out by the study and use of many books, a considerable number of which formed part of the ancient Greek literary legacy. A significant aspect that is worth investigating in this chapter is the extent to which this Greek legacy, as represented by the works of Plutarch, one of the most productive exponents and staunch defenders of Hellenism, left its mark on Xanthopoulos' literary output and how it manifested itself.

Unfortunately we know far less of Nikephoros Xanthopoulos' life and career than we might wish.<sup>3</sup> He was the brother of Theodore Xanthopoulos, an

<sup>1</sup> See, *inter alios*, Wilson (1983: 229–256); Fryde (2000).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Matschke, Tinnefeld (2001: 232–240).

<sup>3</sup> The scant information available in extant sources has resulted in divergent estimations regarding the possible dates of Xanthopoulos' birth and death. See Beck (1959: 705–707); *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 11: 203–208 (D. Stiermon); *PLP* 20826; *ODB* p. 2207 (A.-M. Talbot); Browning (1985: 144–145); Kotzabassi (1989: 110).

equally learned ecclesiastic, well attested in the epistolary sources of the period as a person involved in public affairs and entrusted with imperial missions.<sup>4</sup> Until recently Nikephoros appeared in secondary literature with Kallistos as a second name but, following some critical reconsideration, this is now assumed to be merely the name of his spiritual father.<sup>5</sup> He was a member of the clergy of Hagia Sophia, yet in addition to serving the patriarchate of Constantinople he was in close contact with the imperial palace and court too. The literary character of his oeuvre (liturgical, ecclesiastical, and hagiographical) was not well suited to the insertion of ecclesiastical and autobiographical allusions, and the meagre personal data that we can glean from the rest of his output as well as from epistolary evidence provides no more than some vague chronological indications and hints about the circumstances in which he lived. Moreover, the letters that can be attributed to him are few in number and lacking in concrete information. And though there are a fair number addressed to him, they provide only some insights into the intellectuals he was associated with and confirm that he was an avid reader of books. In the correspondence of Michael Gabras (c. 1290–post 1350) he appears as the owner of copies of Plato (ep. 1), Herodotus (epp. 3, 15) and Aelius Aristides (epp. 266, 269, 270, 303),<sup>6</sup> while in one of his surviving letters he reproduces a story about the sculptor Pheidias as related in Lucian's dialogue *Defence of the "portraits"* (ch. 14).<sup>7</sup> As was typical of his age, Xanthopoulos was indeed a scholar well versed both in Christian and secular literature.

The image of Nikephoros as a person who devoted much of his time to books should not lead us to underestimate his active role in the politics of the day. His writings document him as a determined opponent to the Union of the Churches and a defender of the “official” stance on this issue of both the Emperor and the Patriarchate. Xanthopoulos’ close association with the court of Andronikos II Palaiologos (1282–1328) no doubt gave him an exalted position in Constantinopolitan society and intellectual life, just as it must have caused him troubles following the dethronement of this emperor by his grandson Andronikos III (1328–1341) after seven years of civil war. As happened with quite a few contemporary literary figures, the upheaval of the political conflicts and ecclesiastical debates of the 1320s – a time when the empire was in

<sup>4</sup> On this personage, see *PLP* 20816 and Riehle (2016).

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, the title and contributions of the collective volume Gastgeber and Panteghini (2015).

<sup>6</sup> According to their editor, these letters must be dated to between 1308 and 1326/7; see Fatouros (1973: 58). On the books owned by Xanthopoulos, see Karpozilos (1991: 267).

<sup>7</sup> See letter 1 in Featherstone (1998: 23). Riehle (2016: 166–167) considers that this letter should be assigned to Nikephoros’ brother, Theodore.

decline – had a critical effect on Xanthopoulos' personal life. In a note on a manuscript dating from the mid-fifteenth century he is said to have become a monk by the name of “Nallos”, which should apparently be restored to Neilos.<sup>8</sup>

Theodore Metochites, the leading intellectual of this period and one who was disgraced after 1328, dedicates to him one of his highly sophisticated poems (no XII), composed in heroic hexameters.<sup>9</sup> In this poem, which is, in fact, a letter in verse, the Great Logothete is, on the one hand, complaining about his recipient's neglect of him and, on the other, responding positively to Xanthopoulos' encomiastic comments on his (sc. Metochites') productivity, which was unaffected by his excessive public duties as a statesman.<sup>10</sup> The tone of this poem does not necessarily suggest a close relationship between the two *literati*; rather, it points to mutual esteem and a friendly connection. He must have maintained similar contacts, if not necessarily friendly, with other eminent intellectuals of his own generation and the next, such as Nikephoros Choumnos and possibly Nikephoros Gregoras.<sup>11</sup>

## 2 Plutarch in Xanthopoulos' *Ecclesiastical History*

In the history of Byzantine letters Nikephoros Xanthopoulos is best known as the author of an *Ecclesiastical history*, extant in eighteen books, which cover the period from the salvation of mankind by Jesus Christ to the end of the reign of Emperor Phokas (610). Yet, according to the information the author provides in his introduction, the *History* must originally have extended to twenty-three books and ended with the reign and death of Leo VI (886–912). With this ambitious venture Xanthopoulos revived a literary genre that first emerged and flourished in late antiquity (early fourth–late sixth century and from Eusebios to Evagrios). Though this *Ecclesiastical history* is no doubt his *magnum opus*, it cannot at first sight claim literary originality, for the simple reason that it relies heavily on material excerpted from other similar compositions. Its historical value rests on recording facts not known from other sources, whereas its

<sup>8</sup> See Stevenson (1888: 123).

<sup>9</sup> On Metochites, see Xenophontos in this volume.

<sup>10</sup> Polemis (2015: cv and 225–236); English tr. Polemis (2017: 245–255).

<sup>11</sup> Choumnos reproaches Xanthopoulos for having ignored him as a result of the acquaintances he (sc. Xanthopoulos) had made with the upper strata of power: ep. 149, ed. Boissonade (1844: 171–172). Xanthopoulos may be the recipient of Gregoras' *epp.* 63–64, ed. Leone (1983, vol. II: 189–191), which have only his family name in the title.

literary merit is largely due to its sophisticated diction and extensive application of the rewriting technique.<sup>12</sup>

As he states in the introductory lines, this gigantic undertaking began when the author was almost thirty-six (*PG* 145, col. 620C) and was based on material collected from the library of Hagia Sophia, which Xanthopoulos had frequented since his youth (*PG* 145, col. 609C). The work is dedicated to the Emperor Andronikos II, styled as most pious and holy in the title of the lengthy and entirely encomiastic address (*prosphōnēma*) that precedes its preamble. This kind of imperial panegyric, placed as it is at the very front of an *Ecclesiastical history*, takes its inspiration from the fifth-century *Ecclesiastical history* of Sozomenos, who also dedicated his work to a reigning Emperor, namely Theodosios II (408–450). Apart from appropriating the idea of composing such an address, Nikephoros made a great many extensive verbal borrowings from the same work.<sup>13</sup>

It is in this eloquent, yet rather declamatory, sample of Palaiologan rhetoric that Xanthopoulos first reveals his attraction to Plutarch by twice referring to him *nominatim*. In his praise of Rome the sage of Chaeronea is said by Damophilos to have stated that the age-old fierce strife between Virtue and Fortune was settled peacefully and their union resulted in the production of the best of human works. In a similar fashion, fear of God (*theosebeia*) and prosperity (*eudaimonia*) came together in the person of the Emperor Andronikos (col. 572C–D). However extravagant, this reference to Plutarch's *On the fortune of the Romans* was not picked up from the original (316E–317A),<sup>14</sup> but was copied from the historian Evagrios. In his *Ecclesiastical history* (Book 6.1) the latter similarly quotes Damophilos of Bithynia, an author whose *floruit* should be placed in the second half of the second century AD, and attributes the honour of reconciling Virtue with Fortune – a feat previously associated only with Rome – to his contemporary the Emperor Maurikios (582–602).<sup>15</sup> When in Book 18, ch. 9, of his *Ecclesiastical history* Xanthopoulos refers to the same emperor, he reproduces this passage from Evagrios verbatim (*PG* 147, 344C–D).

<sup>12</sup> On this work, which must have been completed by 1320, see Gentz, Winkelmann (1966) and Karpozilos (2015a: 99–136). On its significance as a source, see Winkelmann (1971) and (1994); Ivanov (2013). On its dependence on precise sources, see Berger (2015) and (2016).

<sup>13</sup> Karpozilos (2015b); Kaltsogianni (2015: 109–112). Notably, the works of Sozomenos and Evagrios were copied in Bodleianus Barocci 142, a manuscript which includes some notes in Nikephoros' own hand; see Wilson (1974).

<sup>14</sup> On this work and the contest between Virtue and Fortune on which it elaborates, see Swain (1989).

<sup>15</sup> As pointed out by Kaltsogianni (2015: 120–121).

The second explicit reference to Plutarch that we find in the same dedicatory address to Andronikos II is more authentic, albeit generic. According to the rhetor, no one is comparable to the dedicatee, and, had Plutarch, who was so skilled at such tasks, still been alive, he would have despaired of finding a “suitable comparison” for the Emperor (*PG* 145, col. 588B). To further corroborate his contention that Andronikos has no equal, Xanthopoulos inserts a list of all the possible (but rejected) candidates: holy figures from the Old Testament (from Adam to Solomon), plus Cyrus, Darius and Alexander and – to complete the list – all the Julii, the Augusti and the Caesars (all cited in the plural). According to the author, all these persons distinguished themselves by displaying some virtue, yet they failed to achieve the blend of virtues accomplished in Andronikos’ kingship. Some scholars have suggested that, as far as the biblical figures are concerned, this list is partly identifiable with a similar but longer and more detailed one inserted as a *synkrisis* in the peroration of Gregory of Nazianzus’ *Funeral oration on St Basil* (*Or.* 43, chs. 70–74). Moreover, it has been suggested that the addition to this list of the names of secular governors and rulers is explained by the subject of this work, who was an emperor and not a saintly bishop.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, Xanthopoulos’ model-text for this list was another often quoted text of the Nazianzene, the *Funeral oration on St Athanasios of Alexandria* (*Or.* 21, ch. 3). Here we find a more concise *synkrisis* of the subject of St Gregory’s praise with the biblical figures cited by Xanthopoulos. His dependence on this precise work becomes all the more obvious if we notice the words that follow the list. They are likewise derived from this precise oration (*Or.* 21, ch. 4). Xanthopoulos rounds off his whole argumentation on this point by claiming that Andronikos’ achievement was “to make his reign inimitable in that he superseded some, emulated others but to no one, as it were, was this emperor inferior, not even a little bit” (*PG* 145, col. 588C). Significantly, while passing over in silence the name of such a prominent Christian author as Gregory of Nazianzus, Xanthopoulos cites here that of a secular one.

The other Plutarchan borrowings that we can identify from the same piece of rhetoric are more allusive. We hear that Andronikos came to reconcile the warlike with the humane, the mild with the manly, the beneficent with the provident, the irascible with the placable (*PG* 145, col. 573B). Moreover, we are told that “the favour, esteem and benignity shown by the Emperor evoke a rich increase in the arts and in good characters” (*PG* 145, col. 577B–C). The above attributes are taken from the essay *On the fortune and virtue of Alexander the Great* (332D and 333C respectively) and are meant to add to the number and

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Sinko (1906), Somers (2015: 61–63).

extent of the virtues assigned to the subject of praise.<sup>17</sup> Andronikos is thus implicitly likened to Alexander, and the qualities that the latter demonstrated in war and peace are rhetorically passed on to the former.

Aside from this introductory Address to the Emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos, the name of Plutarch recurs in the chapter of the *Ecclesiastical history* entitled “On Saint Isidore of Pelusium and what he wrote to Cyril (sc. of Alexandria) and others about John Chrysostom” (Book 14, ch. 53, PG 146, 1253C–D). Here Xanthopoulos pieces together long extracts from Isidore’s vast correspondence in order to flesh out the idea that Chrysostom excelled in eloquence and clarity of speech. One such extract comes from a letter of Isidore (ep. 11 42), where Plutarch is quoted as having maintained that lucidity and smoothness (*to saphes kai leion*) are the qualities which distinguish the genuine Attic style. In accordance with this Plutarchan dictum (fr. 186), John Chrysostom must be deemed superior to all in that he was a practitioner of the Attic language and displayed a greater gift for clarity than anyone else.

Xanthopoulos’ reproduction of Plutarchan quotations from “indirect” sources rather than from the original should not mislead us into thinking that his acquaintance with the work of the Greek biographer and moralist was superficial and lacking in any creativity whatsoever. Before passing a negative verdict on him, we should bear in mind that the “cut-and-paste” process is pervasive in the *Ecclesiastical history*, a derivative work in all respects which, nonetheless, is a mirror and depository of its author’s wide ranging and varied reading.<sup>18</sup> What must be remembered above all is the frequency of the Plutarchan quotations, not necessarily of what kind they were or which source they derived from.

### 3 Plutarch in Xanthopoulos’ Hagiography

All in all, for a more creative use of Plutarch, we must turn to Xanthopoulos’ hagiography, another essential aspect of his literary activity. Apart from synaxarial verses and notices, which he must have compiled in a rather systematic fashion,<sup>19</sup> he tried his hand at composing full-length saints’ *Lives* and *encomia* as well as collections of miracles in both prose and verse. Xanthopoulos is indeed the author of a remarkable and varied text, the *Miracula of the Virgin Mary of the source* (*Pēgē*) (BHG 1073), a much celebrated monastery and shrine

<sup>17</sup> These Plutarchan debts were noted by Kaltogianni (2015: 121, n. 80).

<sup>18</sup> The same technique applies to a large number of his surviving works too, for instance the so-called “Brief exegesis” to the *Ladder* of John Climacus: see Antonopoulou (2007).

<sup>19</sup> Kolovou (2001) and Stefec (2012).

lying outside the walls of Constantinople. The core of this literary endeavour consists of sixty-six stories of miraculous cures, divided into two distinctive sections, each introduced by a rhetorical preamble. The first section is a sophisticated elaboration of the stories included in a previous collection composed in the tenth century, whereas the second section provides an account of miracles dating from Xanthopoulos' own time. Apart from his demonstration of impressive medical knowledge, what surprises the modern reader of this collection is the author's "rational" approach to therapy.<sup>20</sup> The idea that all diseases have a moral foundation and that people are responsible for their cures as well as their afflictions undoubtedly reflects an "open-minded" personality, akin to Greek moral philosophy and the Plutarchan ideals.

Nikephoros' predilection for lengthy works is once again confirmed by the "Narration in iambic verses of St Nicholas' miracles" (*BHG* 1361), a work which extends to some 2,700 verses and is for the most part unedited.<sup>21</sup> This piece and the rest of his extant hagiography are in line with the prevailing tendency in the early Palaiologan period to extol saintly figures of the distant past (whether widely acclaimed or not) in an innovative literary form.<sup>22</sup> For Xanthopoulos the writing of a hagiography was in each case occasioned by a specific reason, personal or otherwise, and, on the whole, it was not something confined to a precise period of his life. Remarkably, three of his hagiographical works celebrate holy women.

The earliest of them seems to have been the Oration (*Logos*) on St Mary Magdalene (*BHG* 1162) which, according to his own testimony, was composed when he was just twenty (*PG* 147, cols 541A and 576A). Drawing as it does at length and exclusively on scriptural evidence and vocabulary, this work is devoid of classical allusions and references to pagan exempla. We gain a rather similar picture from another of his works dedicated to a holy woman, the *Life and miracles of St Euphrosyna the younger* (*BHG* 627). Xanthopoulos' narrative is set in two different periods, that of the Emperor Leo VI, in whose reign (886–912) the holy nun Euphrosyna lived, and the author's own lifetime, when her holy relics proved beneficial, mostly to women suffering from barrenness. The flattering mention of Michael IX Palaiologos as "my Emperor" (ch. 38) allows this text to be dated to before 1320, the year when Michael, the elder son and co-Emperor of Andronikos II died in Thessaloniki. The classical reminiscences of this elegant piece of prose seem to be limited to some stock proverbs and a citation from a Homeric verse. Nonetheless, it is plausible

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Efthymiadis (2004).

<sup>21</sup> Efthymiadis (2014: 171). New edition announced by Vassis (2007: 337, no. 104).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Talbot (1991) and (2011).

that in some instances the author's theoretical approach intersects with some Plutarchan ideas. In the opening lines of this *Life*, St Euphrosyna is extolled for her *prohairesis* (her free choice or conviction) on the one hand, to abstain from mixing with others and, on the other, to cling steadfastly to divine love (ch. 1). *Prohairesis*, a word that encapsulates thought and motivation, is undoubtedly a key word in Plutarch's moral philosophy and as such would be amply explored in the hagiography of one of Nikephoros' younger contemporaries, the scholar Nikephoros Gregoras (c. 1290/1–1358/61).<sup>23</sup> The question remains, however, whether Xanthopoulos' use of the word can be linked to Plutarch himself or should merely be regarded as a formula recorded in previous hagiographic literature.

The third holy woman who received Xanthopoulos' attention was Thomais of Lesbos, a tenth-century saint venerated at the Constantinopolitan convent dedicated to the Virgin Mary and known as *ta Mikrou Rhomaiou*. Thomais was not a holy nun but a married woman whose sainthood was not brought out by her excessive piety alone but was chiefly prompted by the mistreatment that she suffered at the hands of her coarse and violent husband. The longest text dedicated to her (BHG 2455) has been anonymously preserved in the codex *Atheniensis graecus* 2104; yet, on various grounds, as has recently been argued, it can be securely ascribed to Nikephoros Xanthopoulos.<sup>24</sup> The reason for composing this work was the fact that, thanks to contact with the saint's coffin, the health of the hagiographer, who had been suffering from a nasty sore on his head, was miraculously restored.<sup>25</sup> Unlike the two previous ones, this *Life* is couched in a high-flown prose style and is teeming with classical quotations and allusions. At least one explicit quotation and one implicit reference pertain to Plutarch.

Given the basic narrative axis, which is an opposition between the saintly woman and her tyrannical husband Stephanos, the latter is variously and repeatedly reprimanded for having distrusted his pious wife and treated her in an abominable fashion. Rhetorically addressed by the author, the husband Stephanos is asked whether, rather than a stay-at-home wife, he would prefer to see her getting out and about, or looking around while seated at the window (apparently a rather daring kind of socialising!), dressed in provocative garments, or smeared with cosmetics in order to charm spectators. According to the hagiographer, such behaviour and attire can be "a cause of frenzy

<sup>23</sup> See Hinterberger (2004); Paraskevopoulou (2013: 72 and 86–87).

<sup>24</sup> Efthymiadis (2015).

<sup>25</sup> Ed. Halkin (1988: 211–212).

(*hylē manias*) as Plutarch, a man rich in learning, has shown" (*ho peri logous ploutōn apephēnato Ploutarchos*).<sup>26</sup> The passage is rather hard to locate in the Plutarchan corpus, though a possible source may be ch. 14 of the *Life of Lycurgus* which provides an excursus on the strict precepts that the Spartan lawgiver set for the attire of young Spartan women when in public. What should be noted, however, in this case is that the whole rhetorical address is not inspired by Plutarch's writings but by John Chrysostom's preaching moralism. Xanthopoulos is echoing the latter's fiery orations addressed to his congregation in Antioch here rather than drawing on Plutarch's moral teachings.<sup>27</sup> And, as a matter of fact, a Plutarchan influence on the thought of the sternest of Christian moralists can be quite easily detected despite the fact that Plutarch is never mentioned in his work. For all their divergent points of departure, in criticising spousal violence as well as immoral behaviour, luxury, spectacles, and all kinds of passions, Chrysostom and the Greek pagan moralist often share common ground.<sup>28</sup> We cannot tell for sure whether Xanthopoulos was fully aware of their correspondences and resemblances or brought them together on his own initiative, so to speak. We can, nonetheless, note that he deemed it more appropriate in this instance to cite the name of the Greek moral philosopher than that of the most celebrated Christian orator.

Different in character, yet equally instructive, is the second passage in this *Life of St Thomais* that betrays inspiration from a Plutarchan essay. By and large elaborating on the same idea, i.e. that her disastrous marriage failed to alter her virtuous attitude in life, the hagiographer rhetorically assesses that neither her look nor her gestures were affected by a corruption in which even Isis would have been entrapped.<sup>29</sup> Though introduced as a metaphor, this passing mention of the Egyptian goddess echoes her portrayal in Plutarch's *On Isis and Osiris*. In this highly informative treatise regarding Egyptian religion<sup>30</sup> Isis is cited as the goddess who "curtails licentiousness and the love of pleasure and induces a habit of patient submission to the stern and rigorous services in shrines" (*De Is. et Os.* 351F–352A, trans. Babbitt). Xanthopoulos is thus offering an attestation to this essay of which the earliest surviving witness is

<sup>26</sup> Ed. Halkin (1988: 201).

<sup>27</sup> E.g. *To the people of Antioch (Ad populum Antiochenum – CPG 4330)*, PG 49: 190; *Which women one should marry (Quales ducendae sint uxores – CPG 4379)*, PG 51: 239–240 (ch. 9).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Schroeder (2004) and Roskam (2015), who, however, does not take this influence for granted.

<sup>29</sup> See ed. Halkin (1988: 198–199).

<sup>30</sup> See Flacelière (2003: CLXXI–CLXXV).

Ambrosianus gr. 859, a manuscript copied shortly before 1296.<sup>31</sup> Significantly, in this very essay Isis is shown to be in conflict with an enemy, Typhon, who is conceited (*tetyphōmenos*) because of ignorance and deceit and, as a result, he disrupts and devastates the sacred word (*De Is. et Os.* 351E). In the light of this opposition, the paradigm of Isis seems not to have been planted in the narrative gratuitously but in order to implicitly sustain the *synkrisis* emerging from the contrasting and conflicting portrayals of Thomais and Stephanos. Moreover, a major theme in *On Isis and Osiris* is the intrusion of evil into the world and its interpretation through religious beliefs. By virtue of its dualistic tendency,<sup>32</sup> therefore, this Plutarchan essay perfectly suited a work which elaborates on an antithesis between a positive and a negative character. Not accidentally, Thomais' and Stephanos' contrasting inclinations towards virtue or vice are denoted by the double use of the word *prohairesis*, as applying either to the saint or her persecutor. Thomais distinguished herself by the abundance of her magnanimity and God-pleasing conviction and motivation, whereas Stephanos demonstrated the inclinations of a bandit.<sup>33</sup>

#### 4 Conclusion

This short survey of Xanthopoulos' hagiographical legacy reveals an author who is quoting Plutarch from memory rather than directly from the source. Notably, we should interpret this practice not as pointing to a weak knowledge of the Plutarchan oeuvre but, conversely, as suggesting a great deal of familiarity with this particular postclassical author.

Combining this observation with the overall picture of his use of Plutarch in the works discussed above, we cannot help but notice Xanthopoulos' strong tendency to highlight this author in "secular" and "ecclesiastical" writings alike. While an obvious source to mine for an imperial panegyric such as the Address to Andronikos II Palaiologos, Plutarch the moralist came to be equally appropriate for extrapolation in the types of literature, like, for instance, hagiography and ecclesiastical history, where "outer learning" could not justify more than a discreet presence. In fact, the character of Plutarch's work, rich in *exempla*

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Irigoin (2003: CCLXXI). Also, Pérez Martín in this volume.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Dillon (2014: 64–65).

<sup>33</sup> For these antithetical occurrences of the term, see ed. Halkin (1988: 215–216), *periou-sia megalopsychias kai philotheou gnōmēs kai prohaireseōs*, and ed. Halkin (1988: 202), *apanthrōpou lēstrikēs prohaireseōs*.

and didactic stories and sayings, lent itself to being quoted “in isolation”, i.e. in extracts out of their primary context. Following in the footsteps of authors like Isidoros of Pelusium and Evagrios, Xanthopoulos explores this perspective in his *Ecclesiastical history* by quoting in turn their Plutarchan quotations!

Nonetheless, in a period when the study of Plutarch was invested with additional authority and had reached a peak reflected, on the one hand, in Maximos Planoudes’ systematic collecting, editing and copying, and, on the other, in Theodoros Metochites’ essays, Nikephoros Xanthopoulos was equally prompt to treat the Plutarchan legacy more seriously than as a mere source of moral lessons. The tendency to portray his saintly heroines as forceful personalities acting on their own free will, a significant feature of his hagiography and a step towards a liberation from formulas, chimed well with the promotion of a Greek moral philosopher, who was then being read in a relatively open-minded spirit.

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# Plutarch and Late Byzantine Intellectuals

## (c. 1350–1460)

*Florin Leonte*

The study, imitation, and emulation of classical authors played a key role in shaping late Byzantine literary attitudes and approaches. After Michael VIII Palaiologos reconquered Constantinople in 1261, interest in classics increased and gave birth to an intellectual movement that was often dubbed, albeit improperly, the “Palaiologan Renaissance”.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the re-location of the Byzantine elites in their former precincts gave a new impetus to scholars and patrons alike to engage with classical scholarship. As suggested by the late Byzantine circulation of manuscripts and the frequent epistolary exchanges, collecting and commenting on the works of ancient authors was a highly valued intellectual pursuit.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the necessity to better define and re-position Byzantine identity in the new political configuration of late medieval Mediterranean<sup>3</sup> prompted the *literati* to emphasise Byzantium’s connection with ancient Hellenic figures and to glorify Greece’s past. Often, these elements inspired by the study of classics provided solid frames of reference for ideological statements that underpinned individual or collective agency and identity.

Central to the reception and use of classics in creating new meanings relevant to the fourteenth and the fifteenth century was the late Byzantines’ predilection for specific ancient authors and texts. Certainly, authors like Homer, Plato, and Aristotle continued to have a strong influence on Byzantine scholars, as indicated not only by the number of their manuscripts in circulation but also by their overall influence, detectable in a wide range of philosophical,

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1 On the revival of classical models and the study of classical authors in late Byzantium there is a vast scholarship on both broad processes of cultural renewal and on individual authors: Fryde (2000), Mergjali (1996), Canart (2010), Wilson (1996), Gaul (2011), Tinnefeld (2001: 221–385), Pontani (2015).

2 Many Palaiologan letters contain reminders for addressees to return manuscripts. See, for instance, the collections of letters by Demetrios Kydones (ed. Loenertz), John Chortasmenos (ed. Hunger), or Manuel II Palaiologos (ed. Dennis).

3 For an account of the transformations in the late Byzantine Empire, see Nicol (2004).

moral, or theological texts.<sup>4</sup> Other ancient authors attracted attention for specific purposes: Lucian's dialogues for instance, became a model for authors of satirical dialogues that criticised Byzantine mores.<sup>5</sup> Lucian's influence extended beyond satire as well, for his texts were regarded as efficient pedagogical instruments for the teaching of Greek to Italian scholars.<sup>6</sup> Similarly to Lucian, Plutarch was one of the authors who, while less popular than Plato or Aristotle, proved instrumental in the formulation of ideas that eventually served late Byzantine authors' particular purposes. The aim of this chapter is to trace the instances in which rhetoricians and philosophers alike used Plutarch's works during the last hundred years of Byzantine history – roughly between the mid-fourteenth century and 1453, the year of the fall of Constantinople into Ottoman hands.

After 1350, when the balance of power tilted in favour of the Ottomans, the political landscape of Byzantium changed significantly and Byzantium constantly faced the threat of dissolution.<sup>7</sup> The intellectuals' perception of the military dangers was at a high level and many scholars began to play an active role in the imperial service, where we often find them as ambassadors or court officials.<sup>8</sup> Intellectual debates over what sort of alliances Byzantium should make were common in the late fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries.<sup>9</sup> Such processes, which concerned the higher echelons of Byzantine society, influenced the ways in which Byzantine authors came to perceive and use past authors, including Plutarch.

Instances of the reception and of the uses of Plutarch's texts in this period surface in several areas: manuscript circulation among *literati*, the configuration of new literary forms, political thought, and philosophy. Certain high-profile Byzantine scholars acquired manuscripts that contained Plutarch's works, as they indicated in their own words. In his epistolary collection, Demetrios Kydones (1324–1398), a prolific Byzantine rhetorician and influential courtier of the second half of the fourteenth century,<sup>10</sup> inquired an

4 The Palaiologan period witnessed the revival of the Platonic dialogue; see Cameron and Gaul (2017: 1–7). Other texts like Manuel Palaiologos' *Seven ethico-political orations* (PG 156: 385–562) follow closely an Aristotelian perspective inspired by his treatises on ethics.

5 The anonymous *Mazaris' journey to Hades* (early fifteenth century) revived the Lucianic dialogues of the dead.

6 Thomson (1966: 75).

7 This process occurred during the reign of Emperor John V Palaiologos (1354–1391). See Nicol (2004: 251–295).

8 Ševčenko (1961).

9 E.g. Demetrios Kydones, *Oration on the support of the Latins*.

10 PLP 13876.

addressee about a manuscript containing Plutarch's works.<sup>11</sup> Another rhetorician and avid book collector, John Chortasmenos (1370–1437),<sup>12</sup> owned a manuscript of Plutarch. Manuel Chrysoloras (1355–1415),<sup>13</sup> a diplomat and disciple of Kydones himself, brought with him to Italy other Plutarchan texts which he used for didactic purposes.<sup>14</sup> In Italy, it was his disciple Guarino Veronese who began to translate several *Lives*, and these translations became popular at that time.<sup>15</sup> Chrysoloras' close friend, Manuel Kalekas (d. 1410),<sup>16</sup> also used Plutarch in the Greek courses he taught to his Italian student Jacopo d'Angelo (1360–1411). After he returned to Italy, Jacopo translated Plutarch's *Life of Marcus Brutus* into Latin (1400).<sup>17</sup> Another Byzantine author, George Gemistos Plethon (1355–1454),<sup>18</sup> had his hands on several manuscripts of Plutarch's texts, including Planoudes' edition preserved in Paris. gr. 1672. Whether in Mistras or in Florence, he excerpted much material from these manuscripts, which he used in his numerous compositions.<sup>19</sup> Plethon also gave his notes to Ciriaco of Ancona, the famous Italian traveller and antiquarian, who quoted an inscription from them.<sup>20</sup> Further references borrowed especially from the *Lives* provide evidence for the late Byzantine intellectuals' familiarity with Plutarch's writings. Occasionally, Kydones cited from Plutarch's *Lives* when praising contemporaries.<sup>21</sup> Panegyrist in particular made heavy use of *Alexander*, as did Manuel II Palaiologos in his *Funeral oration for his brother Theodore*, a text that incorporates multiple quotes from Plutarch.<sup>22</sup>

Such instances suggest that Plutarch's works never ceased to interest the Byzantine intellectuals and were widely studied in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. A closer look at the late Byzantine sources indicates that Plutarch provided not only historical information but also models of literary composition, like the *synkrisis* or the essay on theoretical topics. While the *synkrisis* as a rhetorical exercise had already been present throughout

<sup>11</sup> Kydones, *Letters* 293.23–33.

<sup>12</sup> *PLP* 30897.

<sup>13</sup> *PLP* 31165.

<sup>14</sup> Humble (2010: 243).

<sup>15</sup> Humble (2010: 246–247).

<sup>16</sup> *PLP* 10289.

<sup>17</sup> Botley (2008: 23).

<sup>18</sup> *PLP* 3630.

<sup>19</sup> Diller (1954: 124–126).

<sup>20</sup> Diller (1954: 125).

<sup>21</sup> Kydones, *Letters* 322.16.

<sup>22</sup> E.g. Manuel Palaiologos, *Funeral oration for his brother Theodore* 97 and 99.

the history of Byzantine literature (it was often embedded in panegyrics),<sup>23</sup> arguably it was two late Byzantine rhetoricians who modelled their use of the comparison form on Plutarch's method in his *Parallel lives*. The first one, Demetrios Chrysoloras (1350–1416), was a skilled rhetorician and close friend of the Emperor Manuel II.<sup>24</sup> Like other contemporaries, he composed a great many rhetorical pieces, among which a text entitled *A comparison between the Emperor of today and the ancient Emperors* (c. 1410), addressed to the Emperor himself.<sup>25</sup> This unusual rhetorical piece equally drew on the canons of encomiastic literature as well as on comparisons. Chrysoloras did not conceal the laudatory nature of his text. He did not show any intention to present his *laudandus* objectively in his account and, tellingly, began with the formula “*ariste basileu*” (“excellent emperor”), commonly employed in Byzantine panegyrics.<sup>26</sup> Occasionally, other passages in which Chrysoloras used direct speech suggest that the text was performed publicly<sup>27</sup> and also functioned as a piece of imperial propaganda. Likewise, many passages couched in encomiastic terms describe the “emperor of today” as outperforming other rulers in all respects.<sup>28</sup>

Compared with other late Byzantine examples of court oratory, this text exhibits several peculiar traits. Strikingly, it lacks the encomiastic rubrics defined by Menander, which were commonly followed by the Byzantine panegyrists.<sup>29</sup> Also, unlike what is observed in other encomia, Chrysoloras drew extensively on the Emperor's moral character and intellectual accomplishments, while only sketching his military prowess or achievements. Thus, he extolled Manuel's preoccupation with *logoi* and concomitantly avoided concrete details about Byzantium's dire situation, which had already caused significant territorial losses.

Although the author offers no programmatic statement about the use of the *synkrisis* form, Chrysoloras' method of presenting the Emperor's features echoes Plutarch's technique of comparing and contrasting historical personalities. He made a careful selection of the rulers with whom Manuel

<sup>23</sup> According to Menander the comparison of the *laudandus* with other heroes constituted a key rubric in a panegyric. See Pernot (1963: 72–83).

<sup>24</sup> PLP 31156. He addressed another epistolary encomium to the Emperor as well.

<sup>25</sup> Ed. Lampros (1926: 222–245).

<sup>26</sup> Demetrios Chrysoloras, *Synkrisis* 222.1.

<sup>27</sup> E.g. *Ibid.* 225.15–20.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* 226–227.

<sup>29</sup> According to Menander, an encomium should have a clear sequence of rubrics like the account of the family, the accomplishments, the moral, physical, and military virtues. These rubrics were closely followed by all late Byzantine authors. See Toth (2001).

could be compared, avoiding references to Roman emperors, early important Byzantine rulers like Constantine or Justinian, or philosophers like Plato and Aristotle. Chrysoloras certainly had a deep knowledge of rhetorical genres, as acknowledged by several contemporary authors.<sup>30</sup> Also, his other texts dedicated to Manuel suggest a tendency to experiment with various literary forms and genres.<sup>31</sup>

A look at the main sections of the *Comparison* will indicate how Demetrios made use of the synkritic form. The prologue offers an assessment of the previous rulers' habits and behavior. Past rulers who lived before Alexander the Great<sup>32</sup> did not concern themselves with the fate of their subjects or with their freedom. Chrysoloras described them as savage perpetrators of unjust acts and deplores their crimes:

they wanted to strike with fear the inhabitants (of the conquered lands) and to slaughter the men, the children and the women. They also wished to destroy the cities and drive them into slavery, but, for that reason, they did not enjoy a good fame. Savage and beastly by nature, thirsty for human blood, they did not show courage but only over-bold rage.

*Synkrisis*, 222.14–17

Chrysoloras concludes that these rulers were confused, unjust and irrational in their behavior, a fact which eventually led them to lose authority over their peoples.<sup>33</sup> By contrast, he notes, the *laudandus*, even when he conquered cities in Thessaly, offered protection to all the people living there. To round off this ideal portrayal, Chrysoloras employs several stock images common in the panegyrical tradition: the Emperor is like a “doctor” for his people (*iatros*) and he is gentle and kind.<sup>34</sup>

After the initial praise for the Emperor, Chrysoloras moves on to his similarities with and differences from previous rulers. The comparison unfolds along several sections. At the outset, Chrysoloras takes a metaphorical approach as he notes that the stone or marble monuments that honoured the memory of previous rulers will decay with the passage of time, while the Emperor's monuments, that is, his numerous writings (*logoi*), will last forever. According to Chrysoloras, who echoed other contemporary views, Manuel's intellectual

<sup>30</sup> Manuel Palaiologos, *Letters* 33 addressed to Demetrios Chrysoloras.

<sup>31</sup> For instance his *Hundred letters addressed to the Emperor*, which combines the epistolary and the encomiastic forms.

<sup>32</sup> Demetrios Chrysoloras, *Synkrisis* 222.10.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* 224.4–10.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* 228.12 and 229.3.

legacy<sup>35</sup> was his badge of authority just like gold was the symbol of power for Oriental rulers like Cyrus or Croesus.<sup>36</sup> In contrast to such men, the Byzantine Emperor possessed a far more reduced wealth, which he moreover acquired in righteous ways (*dikaios ploutos*).<sup>37</sup> His material possessions included few objects, like weapons or precious silk,<sup>38</sup> and the few imperial territories in Macedonia, Peloponnese and Thrace.

Fittingly, the ensuing section of the encomium compares the Emperor to the philosophers of the past. Manuel surpassed Democritus and Anaxagoras in the “magnitude of his thinking” (*megalonoia*).<sup>39</sup> He also superseded other wise men like Solon, Diogenes the Cynic, and the gymnosphists especially in matters concerning negotiations or on questions of political design and agency.<sup>40</sup> A further level of comparison concerns the ancient Egyptian rulers, who became famous for their pyramids.<sup>41</sup> For Chrysoloras, this comparison offered the opportunity to mention the Emperor’s building projects across Byzantium that improved the life of various communities. Yet, in Chrysoloras’ view, the Emperor’s key virtue remained his constant preoccupation with scholarly explorations. The Emperor came close to most philosophers and writers of ancient Greece whom he surpassed on account of the length and variety of his works: letters, essays, or verses on both theological and “natural” topics (*ta physika*).<sup>42</sup>

The next section compares Manuel to other rulers of Byzantium.<sup>43</sup> The Emperor was not only wiser than the previous rulers in Constantinople but also more effective in both internal and external affairs.<sup>44</sup> In an allusion to the active role that he assumed in the Byzantine judicial system during the late fourteenth century,<sup>45</sup> Chrysoloras states that he used the same righteous standards for the rich and the poor.<sup>46</sup> His military skills and records were also superior,

<sup>35</sup> On Manuel’s rhetorical production and its significance for the construction of new ideological underpinnings for the imperial position, see Leonte (2012).

<sup>36</sup> Demetrios Chrysoloras, *Synkrisis* 229.22–27.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 229.29.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* 230.1–11.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* 230.16.

<sup>40</sup> In the late Byzantine period, Solon, the Athenian legislator, stood as one of the major figures who corresponded to the intellectuals’ ideals of political renewal (Manuel Palaiologos, *Seven political orations*, 1).

<sup>41</sup> Demetrios Chrysoloras, *Synkrisis* 231. 8–26.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* 232.1–234.10.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 234.11–236.1.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* 234.15–17.

<sup>45</sup> Barker (1967: 78–82).

<sup>46</sup> Demetrios Chrysoloras, *Synkrisis* 236.7–9.

as he fought enemies in Asia, the Balkans, the Peloponnese, Macedonia and Thrace.<sup>47</sup> Unlike his predecessors on the Byzantine throne, he supported and showed respect towards the Church and made all efforts to defend the Empire. He travelled a long journey to Britain<sup>48</sup> and built a long wall protecting the Peloponnese from Ottoman incursions, the so-called Hexamillion wall, a unique construction at the time.<sup>49</sup>

The terms of comparison that Chrysoloras used suggest that, although embedded in an encomiastic work, his overall synkritic approach had specific functions inasmuch as it followed a particular compositional order designed to draw together the realms of Byzantine and ancient history and to place the Emperor within a broader historical context. From the savage rulers of mythical times, the text advances to the rulers of ancient Greece, to its philosophers and wise men, to the rulers of the East, and, eventually, to the Byzantine emperors. The sections of the text stand as individual pieces in a rhetorical representation that engenders the polarisation between “the emperor of today” and other rulers both of Byzantium and of other states. The resulting imperial image was that of an ideal leader with pronounced intellectual preoccupations and eager to play the role of a righteous judge, two virtues that were not common in late Byzantine encomiastic literature. In terms of literary form, the *synkrisis* borrowed from Plutarch functioned as a kind of scaffolding that legitimised the Emperor’s rule by connecting the *laudandus* to a past of legendary famous rulers, as well as to the history of Byzantium. Both connections were crucial to late Byzantine imperial ideology: the first one served to underscore the significance of Hellenic identity – a major theme in the ideology of the Palaiologan period; the second one pertained to the Byzantine Emperor’s contested authority, an issue that was of utmost importance for Manuel: for many years into his reign, contestations of his dynastic succession came from the supporters of John VII Palaiologos, the son of Manuel’s brother, Andronikos IV.<sup>50</sup> Thus, by collapsing the encomiastic and the synkritic frames in a single text, Chrysoloras wished to broadcast the Emperor’s political and intellectual authority.

To be sure, this rhetorical composition is not a biography or a text of “parallel lives”. Yet, despite its conspicuous encomiastic orientation and distinctive design that brings together not two but multiple historical figures, Chrysoloras’ text follows closely the Plutarchan model of comparing personalities who

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 237.22.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* 239.4.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* 242.25.

<sup>50</sup> Nicol (2001: 281–285). Contestations to his rule came also from contemporary Byzantine ecclesiastics like Makarios of Ankara and Symeon of Thessalonike, who regarded as uncanonical the Emperor’s interferences in the election of patriarchs.

exhibit similar features. The author grounds the Emperor's superior virtues in a rich backdrop of biographical detail concerning his intellectual pursuits, judicial activity, diplomatic endeavours, as well as military campaigns. As a matter of fact, in comparison with other panegyrical texts focused on offering abstract descriptions of imperial magnificence,<sup>51</sup> Chrysoloras offered far more substantial factual information on the Emperor's life and activity. Given that in this period historical works were sparse, it would be plausible to assume that such a text replaced an official public biography for the Emperor.

Another late Byzantine synkritic text, entitled *A Comparison between the ancient and the New Rome*, belongs to the scholar and diplomat Manuel Chrysoloras.<sup>52</sup> Dating to 1411 and addressed to the same Emperor, Manuel II Palaiologos, the text draws on the rich ekphrastic tradition of describing cities, places, or works of art.<sup>53</sup> During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries descriptions of Byzantine cities, be they large or small, became popular again.<sup>54</sup> Palaiologan scholars like Theodore Metochites, Isidore of Kiev, Bessarion, or John Eugenikos described in encomiastic terms the cities of their origin: Constantinople, Trebizond, and Corinth. Chrysoloras employed the main features of this literary form but, like other contemporary authors, he embedded aspects of other genres as well. Thus, his text can also be read like a letter, as suggested in the introduction and the epilogue, where Chrysoloras uses standard epistolary formulas in addressing the Emperor. In addition, it has been argued that features borrowed from the Second Sophistic can be detected in the text.<sup>55</sup> Although here Chrysoloras did not quote Plutarch but mostly later authors like Libanios and John Chrysostom, previously he had already displayed his intimate knowledge of Plutarch's works. Thus, he acquired a manuscript of Plutarch's works which he brought to Italy and used it in teaching Greek for his humanist students in Florence, Pavia or Milan.<sup>56</sup> Subsequent to his visits to Italy, Plutarch' *Lives* began to circulate in Italy and Manuel Chrysoloras' name came to be associated with them.

Despite the two generic features present in the text (epistolary and ekphrastic), it is the idea of comparing the two cities that shapes the text: while there are strong historical ties between Old Rome and New Rome, the latter

<sup>51</sup> E.g. Isidore of Kiev's *Encomium for Emperor John VIII Palaiologos*, probably the most extensive panegyric in Byzantine court literature.

<sup>52</sup> Ed. Billo (2000). It is plausible that Manuel and Demetrios were related, but there is no evidence of their kinship.

<sup>53</sup> Webb (2009) and Saradi (2011).

<sup>54</sup> Saradi (2011).

<sup>55</sup> Webb (2012: 123).

<sup>56</sup> Humble (2010: 243–247).

has a more glorious history. The timing of this message was also important: in 1411, after he taught Greek in several Italian cities and after he became famous in the humanist circles, Chrysoloras visited Italian courts in search of political and military support for Byzantium. In his double role of Byzantine ambassador and mentor of many Italian influential scholars, he hoped to raise awareness among western power brokers about the problems encountered at home. These circumstances indicate that the text certainly had an audience wider than that of the Constantinopolitan courtiers. Later on, the popularity of Chrysoloras' *Synkrisis* in humanist Italy increased because of a Latin translation that came to circulate among his former disciples.<sup>57</sup>

The theme of the close ties between Rome and Constantinople originated in the late Byzantine scholars' perception that solely the Latins could shield the Empire from Ottoman attacks. Certain authors argued that the Byzantines and the Latins shared the same identity, connected as they were by their Christian faith and their common Roman heritage.<sup>58</sup> In a contemporary panegyric, Isidore of Kiev went as far as to speak of a single people of *Rhomhellenes*, the Roman-Greeks.<sup>59</sup> Although he was certainly inspired by such ideas of ethnic unity, Chrysoloras rather aimed at showing the superiority of Constantinople. He proceeded from a detailed description of Rome's architectural landmarks, many of them dating from Antiquity: walls, colonnades, palaces, council chambers, marketplaces, baths, and theatres.<sup>60</sup> Yet Chrysoloras' attention was captured by the triumphal arches, the Greek inscriptions, and the statues still extant in the city. Ruth Webb has convincingly argued that, especially when describing statues, Chrysoloras used the ancient ekphrastic method of describing works of art as if they were alive, in an approach that echoed the ancient rhetorical concept of *enargeia*.<sup>61</sup> The vividness of the descriptions was predicated on the author's effort to historicise the depictions of monumental works. Along these lines, Christopher Smith pointed out that Chrysoloras did not simply describe individual monuments but, rather, he applied historical reasoning to monuments and tried to understand them as "signs of power". Thereby, the text offered not only *ekphraseis* but also a sort of *urban biographies* based on a technique which appears inspired by Plutarch's method of juxtaposing biographies and judging their various facets in parallel.

<sup>57</sup> Maltese (2000).

<sup>58</sup> E.g. Demetrios Kydones' *On the support of the Latins*.

<sup>59</sup> Isidore, *Encomium* 152.

<sup>60</sup> *Synkrisis* 9.

<sup>61</sup> "as if they were alive", *Synkrisis* 10.

By consistently employing a synkritic method, Manuel Chrysoloras highlighted his central idea: because of its superior architectural features and planning and because of its glorious imperial history, Constantinople surpasses Rome: "The Old Rome and the New Rome resemble each other as a mother resembles her daughter; but the latter is more beautiful."<sup>62</sup> Constantinople has fewer ancient statues because it is a more recent city: "The reason why Constantinople does not contain more statues is that it was founded at a time when such things were being neglected even here in Rome on account of religion and, I suppose, men were averse to statues that were similar to idols." Several statues however survived in Constantinople, and Chrysoloras emphasises their presence in a way which turns Constantinople into a metonym for the ideal emperor and for imperial history:

Had I wished to enumerate the monuments, the memorials, the tombs and statues that are in our city, I would not have been at a loss to do so ... Take for example the tomb of the Emperor who is the founder and guardian of our city and the other tombs that are round it. Or take the statue of the emperor who made laws.... Many other such statues used to be in the city, as shown by the remaining pedestals. How big, precious and beautiful these statues must have been, may be surmised from the beauty, height, splendour and magnificence of the bases. And what of the porphyry column which is at the east end of the same street and raises a cross high in the air.

*Synkrisis*, 17, trans. C. MANGO

Thus, the two cities contrasted in this *Synkrisis* stand for more than simply their physical settings – for, as a matter of fact, Chrysoloras compares histories which have been entangled for centuries. Such a comparison, inspired by Plutarch's approach, was meant to serve not only his rhetorical skills but also his diplomatic purposes in Italy.

Plutarch's influence is even more visible in the philosophical debates of the last century of Byzantine history, as many of his texts – historical biographies or moral philosophy – offered ground for various visions of political renewal. The key figure in this process was George Gemistos Plethon (1355–1454), a leading intellectual of his time, whose major project was to revive the ancient spirit of Hellenism. Although his biography has many blank spots, we know that for much of his life Plethon did not live in Constantinople but in the Peloponnese, at the court of the Byzantine despots in Mistras, where he tried to implement

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62 Tr. Mango (1986: 250), *Synkrisis* 17.

his ideas.<sup>63</sup> He authored several rhetorical orations addressed to the members of the ruling Palaiologan family, political essays, as well as many theoretical texts, including a treatise on the differences between Plato and Aristotle, a treatise on virtues, as well as one on laws inspired by Plato's namesake dialogue. Many Italian humanist scholars acknowledged his broad knowledge.<sup>64</sup> During his visit to Italy occasioned by the Ferrara-Florence Council of 1438, he held a course on Plato which left a deep impression on his Italian students. Yet, his expertise in Plato along with his ideas that favoured Hellenic pagan values attracted not only the admiration of many students but also the animosity of fellow Byzantine scholars. Plethon entered a polemic with Bessarion, another high-profile Byzantine scholar and émigré to Italy on the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. An even bitterer dispute with George Scholarios, who was to become Patriarch of Constantinople after 1453, led to the destruction of his treatise on laws.

If Platonic ideas loomed large in Plethon's *oeuvre*, it is no less true that Plutarch constituted another major source of inspiration for his vision. Both in Mistras, where several Plutarchan works circulated, and later in Florence, he made copious notes from Plutarchan texts, as his extant autograph manuscripts show.<sup>65</sup> Plethon's autograph Marc. gr. 517 includes a section titled *Notes from Plutarch's writings* with passages from the *Moralia*, *On Isis and Osiris*, the *Lives of Theseus and Solon*, and others.<sup>66</sup> Unlike other Byzantine authors, he gathered manuscripts of classical authors not because they elicited interest in antiquity or in order simply to emulate ancient authors but, rather, because he believed that the ideas and values found within those texts could still be applied to Byzantine realities. Theresa Shawcross has argued that Plethon's project of political reform in the Peloponnese, which he detailed in the *Address to Emperor Manuel Palaiologos*, suggests that he was a proponent of laconism.<sup>67</sup> His admiration for Sparta and the Spartan constitution, coupled with his readings from Plutarch's *Lycurgus*, spurred him to propose a society with three classes: warriors, craftsmen, and farmers.<sup>68</sup>

Plutarch's influence is even more visible in several distinct issues: following Plutarch, Plethon argued that the size of the army envisaged for his ideal

<sup>63</sup> Woodhouse (2000: 17–119).

<sup>64</sup> During the Council of Ferrara-Florence Plethon delivered a speech on the eternity of the soul. This influenced, among others, Marsilio Ficino. See Woodhouse (1986: 171–190).

<sup>65</sup> Ms. Marc. Gr. 517, Marc. Gr. 406 and Marc. Gr. 379. See Diller (1956) and Shawcross (2012).

<sup>66</sup> Diller (1954).

<sup>67</sup> Shawcross (2012).

<sup>68</sup> Plethon, *Address on the situation in the Peloponnese*. See Plutarch, *Lyc.* 4.5.

state should be set to six thousand troops.<sup>69</sup> According to his vision, this new Hellenic state would gain further territorial expansion.<sup>70</sup> He collected all the excerpts on Zoroastrian beliefs under the title *Magical words from Zoroaster's Magi*.<sup>71</sup> The Plutarchan interpretation of history stood at the basis of his political thought. Thus he often claimed, in line with Plutarch's views, that only the return to ancient Hellenic identity, including the veneration of pagan gods, would safeguard Byzantium's survival.<sup>72</sup> Based on this oracle and inspired by Plato's political ideas, Plethon proposed in a series of orations to create a new Hellenic state in the Peloponnese, with social rules and classes totally different from the common Byzantine ones. According to George of Trebizond's disparaging report on the philosopher's stay in Florence,<sup>73</sup> Plethon related (?) such an oracle at the Council of Ferrara-Florence in 1438, which reflected his view that the Christian religion would be replaced by another one with a sole doctrine. As recent research has indicated, Plethon took inspiration for this oracle from Plutarch's work *On Isis and Osiris*, a text which he excerpted while in Florence.<sup>74</sup> Later, in his *Laws*, Plethon explicitly quoted Plutarch's account of Isis' and Osiris' powers: "The power of Osiris is fixed in the Moon and Isis, since she is generation, is associated with him.... They also call the Moon the mother of the world and they think that she has a nature...."<sup>75</sup> Although doubtless Plutarch was the source of his vision, Plethon offered a careful selection of the evidence from Plutarch's account of Zoroastrianism, since we know that Plutarch accepted Zoroastrianism but, at the same time, also rejected these specific theories.<sup>76</sup>

Plutarch's influence on Plethon's thought went deeper than the Zoroastrian prophecies. Key notions for understanding Plethon's radical positions, like *Heimarmenē* (Fate) and the human being as *methorion* ("lying between as a boundary"), bear Plutarch's touch.<sup>77</sup> Plethon had defined Fate in Stoic terms as a notion that combined freedom and necessity. In the *Laws* he further elaborated this idea by stating in Plutarchan terms that destiny represented an energised (*kat' energeian*) divine law that keeps together the world and the

<sup>69</sup> Plutarch, *Aratus* 16 and 41, and *Cleomenes* 23, 28. Cf. Plethon, *Address to the Emperor Manuel II* 309–312 and *Admonitory oration to Despot Theodore* 113–135.

<sup>70</sup> Siniossoglu (2011: 72).

<sup>71</sup> Diller (1956).

<sup>72</sup> Shawcross (2012: 418).

<sup>73</sup> Akuşık (2013: 96).

<sup>74</sup> Akuşık (2013: 96).

<sup>75</sup> Plutarch, *De Is. et Os.* 367C, tr. Babbitt.

<sup>76</sup> Siniossoglu (2011: 179).

<sup>77</sup> Siniossoglu (2011: 183–190).

hierarchy of being.<sup>78</sup> The other Plutarchan concept adopted by Plethon, that of the human being as *methorion*, originated in Plutarch's idea that reason (*to logikon*) represented the connection to the divine realm. Plethon introduced this concept in his polemic against Palamite apophaticism which claimed that God is an impenetrable being. In his treatise *Reply to certain questions*, Plethon developed the theory that man is capable of acquiring knowledge about the divine, thanks to the divine essence residing in humans, an idea that again hearkened back to Plutarch's views.<sup>79</sup>

Another text testifying to Plethon's interest in Plutarch's texts was a brief history of ancient Greece that contained information compiled from the historian Diodorus and from Plutarch. In the manuscript, the text bears the title *From the writings of Diodorus and Plutarch*.<sup>80</sup> Although on the surface this text appears as a mere compilation of facts, it has been demonstrated that Plethon rather made a rigorous selection and redesigned the Plutarchan material into a new composition that combined both myths and historical evidence. The text, divided into distinct chapters, was intended as a continuation of Xenophon's history of Greece after the battle of Mantinea between the Spartans and the Thebans. Its topic firmly places it in the context of Plethon's espousal of Hellenic ideals.

Plethon's comprehensive readings into Plutarch also speak about other late Byzantine attitudes and reactions to the ancient author. Even if he never taught in an institutionalised framework, he had many followers, such as the historian Laonikos Chalkokondyles (1430–1490), who became one of Plethon's closest disciples and adopted his mentor's views and idea of a strong Hellenic state. Chalkokondyles, who wrote the history of the Byzantine Empire in its final decades, tried to emulate classical authors like Herodotus and Thucydides in language and approach. As recently suggested, Plethon's Hellenism of Plutarchan inspiration was pervasive in Chalkokondyles' *Historical expositions*.<sup>81</sup> Another student of Plethon, Bessarion (the famous Greek scholar who became cardinal in the Roman Church), took his inspiration from Plutarch when he expressed his admiration for ancient Sparta.<sup>82</sup> Bessarion owned a substantial collection of twenty six manuscripts containing Plutarch's texts, mostly *Lives* and moral essays.<sup>83</sup> Bessarion's effort to assemble this vast collection testifies to the popu-

<sup>78</sup> Plethon, *Laws* 64.

<sup>79</sup> Siniossoglou (2011: 183–190).

<sup>80</sup> Marc. gr. 406, ff. 2r–41r.

<sup>81</sup> Akuşık (2013: 299–300).

<sup>82</sup> Bessarion, *Letter to Constantine Palaiologos* 441, line 1–3 (ed. Moehler, 1942).

<sup>83</sup> Manfredini (1994: 32–36) offers the complete list of manuscripts preserved in the Marcian Library.

larity that Plutarch enjoyed among scholars of the last century of Byzantium.<sup>84</sup> His transportation of the Plutarchan manuscripts to Italy shaped the humanist scholars' understanding of the ancient author. He collaborated closely with the humanist scholar Niccolo Perotti (1429–1480) for the latter's translation of Plutarch's *On the fortune of the Romans*.<sup>85</sup> During the same period, another Italian scholar, Francesco Filelfo (1398–1481), who had resided for a while in Constantinople, also made extensive use of Plutarch. In a Greek letter to Theodore of Gaza, a contemporary Greek émigré scholar, Filelfo, asks for help in finding a proper version of Plutarch's *Spartan sayings*. This letter speaks of Filelfo's constant efforts to find correct versions of classical authors' texts, on the one hand, and Byzantium's role in the transmission of Plutarch into the West, on the other.

### Conclusion

In late Byzantium Plutarch's reception varied from author to author. The beginning of the fourteenth century saw Maximos Planoudes' critical edition of Plutarch's works preserved in Ms. Parisinus gr. 1672 and several individual uses, like those of Theodore Metochites or Thomas Magistros (see Pérez Martín and Xenophontos in this volume). Key Plutarchan notions such as that of the *synphonia* among citizens or cities played a key role in the configuration of the courtiers' identity during the first half of the fourteenth century.<sup>86</sup>

Even after 1350, when the historical conditions changed dramatically and the Empire faced dissolution, Plutarch's texts continued to enjoy popularity among Byzantine intellectuals. Manuscripts of his works circulated and were acquired by scholars who often sought to imitate or emulate classical authors. However, Plutarch's influence went beyond the sheer admiration of classics. His parallel treatment of historical personalities also appears in two rhetorical compositions, a panegyric and an urban *ekphrasis*. Both Palaiologan comparisons had encomiastic purposes, but in Demetrios Chrysoloras' oration this intention appears more clearly. By historicising their subject matter, the two *synkrisis*s written in this period compare past figures or realities with present ones. Both texts had immediate political relevance, as they either underlined the imperial connection with the past or presented Constantinople as a city

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* (33–48).

<sup>85</sup> Wilson (2017: 112).

<sup>86</sup> Gaul (2011: 144–159). On concord in Plutarch see *Praec. ger. reip.*, 193.

superior to Old Rome. Despite specifically addressing an Emperor the two texts certainly had a broader audience, which also indicates that most educated individuals could appreciate the subtleties of their use of an inherited literary form and their allusions to Plutarch. His influence can further be detected in the works of the last major Byzantine philosopher, George Gemistos Plethon, who placed Plutarch's account of a Zoroastrian oracle at the core of his vision of a new state which he planned to develop on Byzantium's ruins and which was to be modelled on ancient Hellenic values.

All these instances underscore Plutarch's ongoing intellectual influence among late Byzantine intellectual circles, even at times of extreme historical difficulty. Given the multiple ties and cultural exchanges between Greek and Italian scholars in the late medieval Mediterranean, this resilience proved crucial for the transmission of Plutarch's works.

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## **PART 3**

### *Other Medieval Cultures*

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## Plutarch in the Syriac Tradition: a Preliminary Overview

*Alberto Rigolio*

The recent publication of a fragment of papyrus and a piece of parchment has raised to seventeen the number of the known papyri attesting the Plutarchan corpus.<sup>1</sup> In fact, both documents contain the same Plutarchan treatise, the *On the control of anger*, and raise questions about the diffusion of the piece in antiquity.<sup>2</sup> As the editor suggests, the majuscule script of the parchment (PHarrauer 1), which derives from a fifth-century codex, can be compared with that of two contemporary papyri of the New Testament,<sup>3</sup> and it may be the case that the codex was produced in a Christian environment. It is in the same period – probably the fifth or early sixth century – that the *On the control of anger* obtained a translation into Syriac by Christian hands. The treatise on the control of anger is one of the three Syriac translations of Plutarch that have survived.

The early chronology of the translations, which implies that the translators relied on majuscule manuscripts, raised the interest of past editors. The translations could – and sometimes did – contribute to the understanding of corrupted passages of the Greek text.<sup>4</sup> Yet modern scholarship has paid much less attention to what these works can tell about the afterlife of Plutarch in broader terms. The Syriac translations attest to the diffusion of Plutarch in Christian hands, and they are evidence of the interest early Christianity showed in the moral advice offered by this author. The Syriac translations also appear to have been actively edited in view of the Christian environment for which they were

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1 The present contribution is a reprint with additions of Rigolio (2013).

2 Lundon (2004); PHarrauer 1 edited in Funghi (2001: 1–6); more on Plutarch's papyri can be found in the contribution by T. Schmidt in the present volume.

3 Funghi (2001: 2).

4 See the edition by M. Pohlenz *et al.* in the Teubner series. Two examples of how the Syriac text could reveal better readings than the surviving Greek manuscripts are: (i) a lacuna in the Greek manuscripts but not in the Syriac (*De coh. ira* 460C: Syr. 193.12): “Indeed, because of pleasure (we) should not rejoice when we punish and repent [once we have inflicted punishment]” (Greek); “(we should) not rejoice when we apply it (i.e. the punishment), but let us be sad when we have inflicted it” (Syriac); and (ii) the insertion of a gloss (*De cap. ex inim. 91E*: Syr 16.10): “the statesman Onomademos” (Greek); “the wise Demos” (Syriac).

intended, and this editing may be indicative of the purpose of the translations. The present paper provides a preliminary overview of the Syriac tradition of Plutarch.

The surviving Syriac translations belong to the first section of the *Moralia* according to the *Corpus Planudeum*:

*On the control of anger (Mor. 29)*<sup>5</sup>  
*How to profit from your enemies (Mor. 6)*<sup>6</sup>

To these two works one should add an otherwise unknown piece, which the Syriac manuscripts attribute to Plutarch but appears unlikely to have been composed by him:

*On training (peri askēseōs)*<sup>7</sup>

The *On training* is a short moralising treatise like many of the *Moralia*, although it cannot be connected with certainty to any known title in the catalogue by Lamprias.<sup>8</sup> The text, originally composed in Greek, takes the form of a speech addressed to young Romans and is structured as an exhortation to practice and discipline.<sup>9</sup>

The author of the *On training* begins by contrasting the advantages of practice with the benefit deriving from a good natural endowment. He soon moves on to argue that practice and discipline can benefit not only the body but also the soul, for they can help control the passions. At the same time, however, the author argues that practice can remedy deficiencies in a person's natural endowment. In addition, the ascetic undertone is a recurrent aspect of the

<sup>5</sup> MS Sinaiticus syr. S. Catherin. 16 (seventh century); BL Add. 17209 (ninth century). Edition de Lagarde (1858: 186–195) from BL Add. 17209. For the Sinai manuscript, see Brock (2006); for the BL manuscript, see Wright (1870: III 1185–1187 mii) and Rigolio (2015).

<sup>6</sup> MS Sinaiticus syr. S. Catherin. 16. Edition and English translation in Nestle (1894); German translation in Ryssel (1896).

<sup>7</sup> BL Add. 17209, where the beginning of the *On training* is missing, and MS Sinaiticus syr. S. Catherin. 16, where the text is complete. Ed. de Lagarde (1858: 177–186) from BL Add. 17209, and the beginning of the piece, with German translation, was edited by Rohlfs (1968); a German translation of De Lagarde's edition is available in Gildemeister (1872), and an English translation on the basis of both manuscripts together with a discussion of authorship can be found in Rigolio (2018).

<sup>8</sup> Gildemeister (1872: 522–524).

<sup>9</sup> The text includes several series of rhetorical questions (178.25–179.5, 180.15, 181.5, 181.25, 184.1–185.15), makes reference to its oral performance (178.15, 186.10), and addresses an audience of young Romans (184.20, 185.15).

“practice” promoted in the *On training*; and constancy, toil, and endurance of hunger, thirst, and lack of sleep are crucial features of the models of behaviour proposed by the author. An ideal of conduct is provided through reference to the philosophers, for they are content with a simple lifestyle, basic food, and modest clothing.<sup>10</sup> The text closes with an exhortation to disregard the pleasures generated by the passions, and it instead invites the audience to practice a life pattern regulated by exercise and discipline. The author illustrates and supports his argument through frequent use of anecdotes, not unlike the *How to profit from your enemies* and the *On the control of anger*, as is common in Plutarch. The anecdotes collected in the *On training* are based on figures of historical significance such as Aspasia, Philip, and Cleopatra, and on philosophers such as Socrates and Plato. The text also includes anecdotes about the painters Protogenes and Nicomachus, and some anecdotes that are not otherwise attested.

The language and the relatively free translation technique of the *On the control of anger* and the *How to profit from your enemies*, but in all likelihood also of the *On training*, indicate that these translations were probably carried out during the fifth or early sixth centuries.<sup>11</sup> Their provenance remains unknown as the manuscripts do not provide any indication about the translators, nor do they contain any preface or commentary. Nonetheless, the comparison with the Greek originals shows a variance in the faithfulness to the text between *On the control of anger* and *How to profit from your enemies*, as the former translation is (generally speaking) freer than the latter. In *On the control of anger* the translation unit often corresponds with the paragraph, while in *How to profit from your enemies* it is generally shorter, often corresponding with the sentence. *On the control of anger* is also often abbreviated in Syriac – a less common feature in *How to profit from your enemies*. Such variance suggests the pieces were not composed by the same translator(s).

Conversely, however, in the view of Eberhard Nestle (the editor of the Syriac *How to profit from your enemies*), the comparison between the renderings of a passage attested in both *On the control of anger* and *How to profit from your enemies* could support the hypothesis that a single translator worked on both pieces.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, an addition (in *italics*) to the translation of *On the control of anger* does not seem to find any justification in the Greek text, but it may

<sup>10</sup> 182.15–183.1.

<sup>11</sup> Respectively Baumstark (1894: 413–422), who based his analysis on *On the control of anger*, and Brock (2003: 16).

<sup>12</sup> Nestle (1894: ix–x); both passages have their origin in Pl., *Lg.* 717c–d. The Greek text is that of Gärtnner (1993).

derive from the translator(s)' familiarity with a passage from the Syriac *How to profit from your enemies*:

*On the control of anger* 456D: Syr. 189.23–25 (Greek original to the left and Syriac translation to the right; in both cases translations are mine)

Therefore, as Plato says, for a word – the lightest thing – they pay the heaviest punishment, for they are considered hostile, slanderous and malicious.

Rightly Plato said: “On account of the word, which is considered to be a light thing, a punishment that outweighs (it) the enemies receive *from God and from men*. ”

*How to profit from your enemies* 90CD: Syr 12.24–13.1

According to the divine Plato, the heaviest punishment is ordained for the word, the lightest thing, *from both gods and men*.

For Plato said: “for a light word men are repaid with harm *by God and by men*. ”

In all likelihood, the words “from both gods and men”, which have no equivalent in Plato, originated from Plutarch’s pen in the composition of *How to profit from your enemies*. On account of his knowledge of the Syriac *How to profit from your enemies*, the translator(s) of *On the control of anger* may have added these words to the translation when coming across the equivalent passage – if Nestle’s argument is to be believed.

Nestle’s reconstruction is certainly possible, but, in fact, it does not solve the problem of the translator’s identity in a definitive way. While the addition of “from both gods and men” could equally have occurred in the (lost) Greek manuscript that was used for the Syriac translation,<sup>13</sup> the very same passage also shows a considerable variance in rendering the equivalent Greek text. The rendering of the Greek *zēmia* once with “punishment” and once with “harm” in Syriac; the rendering of *barytatē* (“the heaviest”) with “that outweighs (it)” in Syriac in *On the control of anger* (despite its omission in *How to profit from your enemies*); and the rendering of *kouphotatou pragmatos* (“the lightest thing”) with radically different Syriac constructions (“which is considered to be a light thing” and “light”) underscore remarkably different translation styles. Different translation techniques may result from diverse translators,

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<sup>13</sup> Or alternatively later in the Syriac tradition.

and further textual analysis may lead to better-grounded conclusions about authorship and chronology.<sup>14</sup>

Editing – in terms of omissions, additions and changes of the text – is another aspect that characterises the Syriac translations of Plutarch. The editing process seems to respond to at least three concerns: (i) a Christianisation of the text, (ii) a selection of the *exempla* reported by Plutarch, and (iii) a generalisation of a number of proper names. Such features result from a deliberate effort to readapt and domesticate the texts with a view to a certain Christian readership and, accordingly, they may contain an indirect trace of the environment behind the enterprise of translation and transmission in Syriac.

- (i) The Christianisation of the translations was mainly achieved through the systematic omission of the (infrequent) direct references to paganism in the works, particularly the interjection “by Zeus”,<sup>15</sup> the references to “gods”,<sup>16</sup> to the Muses<sup>17</sup> and to Fortune,<sup>18</sup> and a passage that more extensively deals with pagan religion.<sup>19</sup> The adaptors were presumably not willing to expose the readership of these moralising pieces to explicit references to pagan religion.
- (ii) At the same time, the adaptors carried out a selection of the *exempla*. The *On the control of anger* and the *How to profit from your enemies* (the *On training* is analogous in this respect) elaborate the moral advice around series of *exempla*, which Plutarch often drew from Graeco-Roman history and literature. The moral recommendations are often inserted in a framework of authority provided by the exemplary or conversely deplorable behaviours of figures belonging to the Graeco-Roman world, usually philosophers (such as Socrates, Diogenes, Zeno), historical personalities (such as Philip, Alexander, Caesar) or mythological figures (such as Achilles, Agamemnon, Adrastus). In the Syriac *On the control of anger* and *How to profit from your enemies*, most of the *exempla* with mythological content have been omitted (nine out of twelve), while comparatively few of the *exempla* about historical personalities have been

<sup>14</sup> For the developments of Syriac translation techniques, see King (2008: 361–388), Taylor (2004), and Brock (1983).

<sup>15</sup> *De coh. ira* 455D; 459C.

<sup>16</sup> *De coh. ira* 455D. The same word is rendered with the singular “God” in the abovementioned passage *De cap. ex inim. goD*.

<sup>17</sup> *De coh. ira* 458E.

<sup>18</sup> *De cap. ex inim.* 87A.

<sup>19</sup> *De coh. ira* 458B: “For this reason, I believe, they call the king of the gods ‘Meilichios’ (“the mild one”) while the Athenians call him ‘Maimaktes’ (“the boisterous one”), but punishment is a matter of the Erynnis and of the *daimones*, not of the divine or of the Olympian.”

omitted (eleven out of thirty-eight). In contrast, all the *exempla* about philosophers have been included in the translation (eleven).<sup>20</sup>

- (iii) In the translations a considerable number of proper names have been rendered in a generalised way, and are often substituted with common and generic ones. To give a few examples, “Xerxes” becomes “a Persian king”,<sup>21</sup> “Arcesilaus” becomes “a philosopher”,<sup>22</sup> the *Pontifex Maximus* “Spurius Minucius” becomes “the judge”,<sup>23</sup> and “Porus” becomes “the king of the Indians.”<sup>24</sup> As a result, a considerable number of direct references to the Greek world are replaced or removed, and the protagonists of the *exempla* (the personifications of particular behaviours) are often generic “kings”, “wise men”, and “philosophers.”

The extent of the editing is certainly considerable, but it seems to respond to identifiable criteria. The adaptors were adamant when dealing with references to pagan religion, and generally firm in the omission of mythological and (to a lesser extent) historical *exempla*. Instead, the praise of the philosopher’s exemplary conduct seems to have been coherent with the aims of the translators. At the same time, the historical and cultural background of the *exempla* seldom raises enough interest to deserve translation, hence the generalisation of proper names. It appears that the morally edifying content of the anecdotes and of the text in general was considered to be of greater importance than their connection to the Graeco-Roman world. Similarly, the dialogue framing of the *On the control of anger* is omitted in Syriac, as the piece instead takes the shape of a plain treatise on anger and its remedies. The presence of such changes associates the Syriac translations of Plutarch with those of other works by Lucian, Pseudo-Isocrates and Themistios.<sup>25</sup>

The Syriac translations constitute evidence of the afterlife of our author in Christian communities. Although at least one or two centuries later than the translations, the Syriac manuscripts also point to a Christian ascetic environment as a possible destination for our pieces. Sinaiticus Syr. 16 (seventh century), which is preserved in Saint Catherine Monastery, contains a monastic anthology.<sup>26</sup> It opens with Palladius’ *Lusiad history* (trans. from Greek), Nilus’

<sup>20</sup> In the present analysis, *exemplum* is intended in an inclusive way, while the renderings of quotations (which are mostly omitted) are not taken into account. A more comprehensive list of *exempla* and their rendering is available in Rigolio (2013a).

<sup>21</sup> *De coh. ira* 455D: Syr 188.23–24.

<sup>22</sup> *De coh. ira* 461D: Syr 194.19.

<sup>23</sup> *De cap. ex inim.* 89F: Syr 11.10.

<sup>24</sup> *De coh. ira* 458B: Syr 191.3.

<sup>25</sup> Brock (2003), Conterno (2010), Rigolio (2013).

<sup>26</sup> Brock (2006: 69–71).

*On Monastic Life* and Aristides' *Apology* (trans. from Greek). Following these are the *How to profit from your enemies*, *On training*, a *Discourse of Pythagoras*, *On the control of anger*, Lucian's *On calumny* (trans. from Greek), a *Discourse by a philosopher on the soul*, the *Sentences of Theano*,<sup>27</sup> and more *Sentences* attributed to Plato and other philosophers. The manuscript closes with John the Solitary's commentary *On ecclesiastes*<sup>28</sup> and John Chrysostom's *Homilies* (trans. from Greek).<sup>29</sup> Plutarch, together with Lucian and florilegia attributed to philosophers, is thus included within pieces by Christian writers and with ascetic content.

It is particularly regrettable that two thirds of the only other known Syriac manuscript of Plutarch have been lost. As the quire numbering makes clear, only the last five quires have survived out of a total of seventeen.<sup>30</sup> Manuscript Add. 17209 of the British Library (ninth century) contains *On training* (the beginning is lost), *On the control of anger*, Lucian's *On calumny*, Themistios' *On virtue* and *On friendship*, and it closes with a collection of short epistles by Gregory of Nazianzus. Since the *On training* and *On the control of anger* are presented in the same order as Sinaiticus Syr. 16, without the insertion of the *Discourse of Pythagoras*, it is possible that both manuscripts ultimately derive the works from the same collection. This proto-collection may have included Lucian too, since the *On calumny* follows in both manuscripts. What remains of BL Add. 17209 consists entirely of translations from Greek, where, in the titles, Plutarch, Lucian and Themistios are each given the attribute "philosopher."

The study of the diffusion of the moral advice proposed in the *On the control of anger* and *How to profit from your enemies* among Greek authors goes beyond the scope of the present chapter.<sup>31</sup> At the same time, however, Plutarch experienced an afterlife in Syriac literature (and also in Arabic literature), but the use and impact of these translations require systematic analysis. A significant example is provided by Antony of Tagrit, a ninth century Syrian Orthodox author who made Plutarch's advice on how to benefit from enemies his own. In the opening of the fifth and last book (the only one published so far) of his treatise on rhetoric, he gave a quotation explicitly drawn from *How to profit from your enemies*.<sup>32</sup> In addition to gaining an extensive knowledge of Greek

<sup>27</sup> Possekel (1998).

<sup>28</sup> Strothmann (1988).

<sup>29</sup> CPG 4529, ed. Bundy (1983), and CPG 4424; Childers (1996).

<sup>30</sup> Wright (1870: 111 1185–1187 mii).

<sup>31</sup> For *De cap. ex inim.* see Fürst (1997); John the Solitary, *Letter to Hesychius* 50, trans. Brock (1987: 93); Garzya (1999); Volpe Cacciatore (2004).

<sup>32</sup> Brock (1997: 67–68). I am very grateful to John Watt, who drew my attention to this passage: Watt (1986: 3.11–16).

rhetoric in Syriac translation, as is attested in his surviving work, Antony also came across Plutarch's treatise on how to benefit from one's enemies. To have enemies could be advantageous so long as one is willing to take their reproaches as exhortations to adopt and stick to a morally sound behaviour. Antony must have read the Syriac translation of *How to profit from your enemies* in a Christian environment, presumably a monastery, now under Abbasid rule.

At the same time, however, it is not possible to exclude the possibility that passages from the Plutarchan translations were included in Syriac florilegia, which are widely attested in early Syriac manuscripts (and often await modern editions). This was the case of the Syriac translations of Ps.-Isocrates' *To Demonicus* and Themistios' *On virtue*. The translations of the two works provided some material, in the form of sayings and *exempla*, for the compilation of anthologies on ethical subjects.<sup>33</sup>

To close this preliminary overview of the afterlife of Plutarch in Syriac, one should turn to Arabic literature (see also Das and Koetschet in this volume). To serve the needs of his family business – a bookshop in tenth century Baghdad – Ibn al-Nadīm composed a catalogue of the manuscripts (and much more) that were available to him at the time. The *Fihrist*, as the work became known, reports the titles of a considerable number of works that are now lost, including Arabic translations from Greek and from Syriac, and contains an entry for Plutarch as follows:<sup>34</sup>

Plutarch:

- Book *Opinions on nature*, which contains the opinions of the philosophers on natural phenomena, in five sections, Qustā ibn Lūqā al-Ba'labbakkī translated it (into Arabic);
- Book addressed to Cornelius, on what (Plutarch) pointed out in connection with *the treatment of an enemy and the way to benefit by him*;
- Book *Anger*;
- Book *Self-training*, one section, in Syriac;
- Book *Soul*, one section.

The *Opinions on nature* can be identified as pseudo-Plutarch's *Doctrines of the philosophers* in Arabic translation, the *Treatment of an enemy* as *How to profit*

<sup>33</sup> Respectively BL Add. 14614 (eighth century) and Sinaiiticus Syr. 14 (tenth century); see now Arzhanov (2019).

<sup>34</sup> Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist* 254.5–8 (the bulleting is mine), edited by Flügel (1872) with a correction for the name Cornelius as noticed by Gutas (1975: 320 n. 2). The English translation is available in Dodge (1970: II 611).

from your enemies, Anger as the *On the control of anger*<sup>35</sup> and *Self-training* as the *On training*. For the (lost) work on the soul, one could think of the Plutarchan *On the soul*, of which only fragments survive.<sup>36</sup> Among the pieces by Plutarch that were known to Ibn al-Nadīm in tenth century Baghdad, therefore, three had previously been translated into Syriac.

The *Fihrist* does not mention the language of *How to profit from your enemies* and the *On the control of anger*, as it does with the *On training*, which was known to Ibn al-Nadīm in its Syriac translation. It is possible that *How to profit from your enemies* and *On the control of anger* were available to Ibn al-Nadīm in Arabic, although (as far as I am aware) no full Arabic translations of any of the *Moralia* survives. Whether these two texts were transmitted from Syriac into Arabic as full translations or as selected excerpts, quotations from them can be found in a number of later Arabic authors. These authors include Miskawayh (932–1030),<sup>37</sup> Al-Mubashshir ibn Fātik (d. 1087),<sup>38</sup> Al-Ghazālī (1058–1111),<sup>39</sup> and anonymous wisdom literature such as the c. eleventh-century *A selection from the sayings of the four great philosophers*.<sup>40</sup>

To conclude, Syriac literature complements our understanding of Plutarch's afterlife in late antiquity. At least two works from the *Moralia*, together with the Pseudo-Plutarchan *On training* (lost in Greek), appear to have been translated on account of their moral contents, and they may attest to the interest of some Christian readers in the ethical advice proposed by Plutarch. The translations strenuously domesticate the original texts, and the process of translation provided the translators with the chance of adapting the Plutarchan pieces by (for example) Christianisation, the omission of references to pagan religion,

35 In Syriac the piece is entitled “Discourse on anger”, despite the Greek *On the control of anger*; see also Levi della Vida (1965: 409–415).

36 Fr. 173–8 (Lamprias' catalogue 209), edited in Sandbach (1967: viii); English translation in Sandbach (1969: xv 306–324).

37 Miskawayh, *The Refinement of character* 193.19–194.7 (*De coh. ira* 435E–F) and 195.1–9 (*De coh. ira* 453F–454A), trans. Zurayk (1968); it is likely that the quotations from Plutarch found in Naṣr al-Dīn al-Tūṣī, *Nasirean Ethics* 128–29 (*De coh. ira* 453E–454A) and 157 (*On training* 180.20–25), trans. Wickens (1964), depend on Miskawayh or earlier Arabic literature.

38 Al-Mubashshir ibn Fātik, *Mukhtār al-ḥikam* 151 (*De cap. ex inim.* 87D, 88C–D, 89B) and 153 (*De coh. ira* 453F–454A, 454E, 455E, 457A–B, 461E–F, 462A), trans. Rosenthal (1975: 124–144); Arzhanov (2012, 2012a).

39 Al-Ghazālī, *The revival of the religious sciences* 3.155.21–25 (*De coh. ira* 435E–F) and 3.155.28–156.1 (*De coh. ira* 453F–54A and 455E–F), trans. Gutas (1975: 322).

40 *A selection from the sayings of the four great philosophers* Plato 28 (*On training* 180.20–25), Socrates 42 (*De coh. ira* 453E–F and 455E–F), and Socrates 48 (*On training* 179.15–180.1), ed. and trans. Gutas (1975).

and the selection of the references to the Graeco-Roman world. The fact that the translations are preserved within monastic anthologies attests to the interest in Plutarch's *Moralia* among certain Christian ascetic environments. The emphasis of the pieces on ascetic practice and the advice on the control of passions are likely to have played an important role in the translation and transmission of the texts into Syriac.

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## Para-Plutarchan Traditions in the Medieval Islamicate World

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Surveying the impact of Plutarch on medieval Islamicate literature and thought is largely a negative exercise, in that Arabic authors from this period had little to no knowledge of his life and genuine works.\* As this chapter will show, however, certain thinkers from the medieval Islamicate world did engage with a number of Plutarchan *pseudepigrapha*. While the term “*pseudepigraphon*” has a considerable semantic range, covering not only forgeries but also texts with false attributions due to some vagary of transmission, it invariably elicits assumptions of inferiority.<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding the writers’ intentions, *pseudepigrapha* are often characterised as products of unoriginal, deceptive minds. In exploring the reception of an author in a particular period, pseudonymous writings nonetheless provide an important indication of how the author was perceived at that time. Thus, we will examine the texts believed by medieval Islamicate readers to be by Plutarch to ascertain how Plutarch and his corpus were understood in the Arabic Middle Ages. Following Hexter’s<sup>2</sup> designation of the pseudonymous works attributed to Ovid in the Middle Ages as “para-Ovidiana”, we refer to the body of works ascribed to Plutarch in the medieval Islamicate tradition as “para-Plutarchan”, because it is a more value-neutral term. The first part of this chapter will first establish which “Plutarchan” texts were translated from Greek into Arabic; the second part will assess their influence on Arabic writers working in various fields. By highlighting the para-Plutarchan traditions in the medieval Islamicate period, we aim to demonstrate the diversity of linguistic and religious contexts in which “Plutarch” could be read.

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<sup>1</sup> On the categories of pseudonymous texts, see Peirano (2012: 1–7).

<sup>2</sup> Hexter (2011: 284–291).

## 1 Cataloguing Plutarch

Plutarch's name is mentioned in two medieval Arabic bibliographies: the *Catalogue (Fihrist)* of the Baghdādī book-seller Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 990 AD; see also Rigolio in this volume) and the *History of learned men (Ta'rikh al-Hukamā')* of the Egyptian chronicler Ibn al-Qiftī (1172–1248 AD).<sup>3</sup> As Ibn al-Qiftī reproduces Ibn al-Nadīm's information verbatim, we derive the following remarks from a study of the *Catalogue*. In a chapter on ancient and contemporary philosophers Ibn al-Nadīm includes entries on two Plutarchs, whom have been identified respectively as Plutarch of Chaeronea and the Neoplatonist Plutarch of Athens (c. 350–430 AD).<sup>4</sup> Although Plutarch of Athens is regarded as the second famous "Plutarch" in antiquity, there is no basis for this identification in Ibn al-Nadīm's text. For, he attributes to this "other" Plutarch a book of *Rivers, their peculiarities, the wonderful things in them, mountains, and other things*, whose title corresponds to the pseudonymous *On the names of rivers and mountains (Defluviorum et montium nominibus)*.<sup>5</sup> This short treatise, which recounts the origin of the names of rivers and mountains, never appears to have been ascribed to Plutarch of Athens in antiquity; in more modern times, it has been connected to Plutarch of Chaeronea's son.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, while Ibn al-Nadīm lists the second Plutarch with late antique philosophers such as Olympiodoros (495–570 AD), he associates him with Hippocrates and Epaphroditus (writers on natural phenomena), and thus appears to interrupt the general chronological sequence.<sup>7</sup>

Ibn al-Nadīm seems to know nothing about the life and thought of the "first" Plutarch. For instance, Ibn al-Nadīm appears to date Plutarch to the fifth century AD, as he places his entry on him after Themistios (317–390 AD) but before Olympiodoros (495–570 AD). Furthermore, whereas Plutarch was recognised as a Platonist in antiquity, he is grouped in the *Catalogue* with Aristotelian commentators. Some Arabic writers ascribe to Plutarch a commentary on

<sup>3</sup> For the Arabic texts of these passages, see Flügel (1871: 254) and Lippert (1903: 257). Dodge (1970: 611) provides an English translation of Ibn al-Nadīm's passage.

<sup>4</sup> Dodge (1970: 611, 612, n. 167).

<sup>5</sup> For the Greek text, see De Lazzer (2003).

<sup>6</sup> The humanist Gerrit Janszoon Vos (1577–1649) proposed this attribution in his *De Historicis Graecis* (1624: 210).

<sup>7</sup> As Toorawa (2010) argues, chronology is not the only ordering principle utilised by Ibn al-Nadīm. The *New Pauly* (s.v. "Epaphroditus") identifies three figures with the name Epaphroditus: a freedman of Octavius, a freedman of Nero, and a Greek grammarian (first century AD). Ibn al-Nadīm attributes to his Epaphroditus a *Commentary on Aristotle's Account of the halo of the moon and the rainbow*. The grammarian Epaphroditus composed commentaries on Homer and is not known to have written on Aristotle.

Plato's *Timaeus*; even so, few thinkers in the medieval Islamicate period show familiarity with his interpretation of the dialogue.<sup>8</sup> Pseudo-Ammonius (ninth century AD) is the only author to make reference to Plutarch's notion that the Forms reside in the Demiurge's intellect.<sup>9</sup> Pseudo-Ammonius does not cite any Plutarchan work that advances this view (e.g. *On Isis and Osiris* 372E–F, *On god's slowness to punish* 550D), and thus appears to be drawing on a later source, possibly Neoplatonic.<sup>10</sup>

Although Ibn al-Nadīm offers no personal details about Plutarch, he names five books by him:

*Opinions of nature [Doctrines of the philosophers]*, which contains the opinions of philosophers on natural phenomena – it is in five books. Qusṭā ibn Lūqā al-Ba'labbakkī translated it. *Morals: About what he pointed out in connection with the treatment of an enemy and the way to benefit from him [How to profit from your enemies]*; *Anger [On the control of anger]*; *Self-training* (one book in Syriac); and *The soul* (one book).<sup>11</sup>

All the texts listed here are philosophical in content. Unaware of his biographical output, medieval Arabic authors knew Plutarch as a philosopher. Of the five titles, only two are authentic Plutarchan works, *How to profit from your enemies* and *On the control of anger*. Ibn al-Nadīm does not specify whether he saw these treatises in Arabic or Syriac, but seems to group them with the pseudonymous *Self-training* and *The soul*.<sup>12</sup> The manuscript Sinai 16,

8 Ibn al-Nadīm (Flügel 1871: 301) and Ibn al-Qiftī (Lippert 1903: 285) attribute to Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (whom we will discuss below) a super-commentary on Plato's *Timaeus* (*Kitāb tafsīr kitāb Flūṭarḥus fi tafsīr kitāb Tūmāwus*). Al-Rāzī does not quote Plutarch on the interpretation of the dialogue in his surviving works, and his bibliographer, al-Bīrūnī, does not list this title. Thus, it is possible that the super-commentary identified by Ibn al-Nadīm and Ibn al-Qiftī designates two separate compositions that became conflated: a commentary on Plutarch's *Doctrines of the philosophers* (see below) and a commentary on the *Timaeus*. Al-Rāzī knew Galen's two exegeses of the dialogue, *On the medical statements of Plato's Timaeus* and the *Synopsis of Plato's Timaeus*, so he may have written a commentary on one of these texts.

9 Ulrich (1989: 35–36). In the medieval period, a doxography *On the views of the philosophers* circulated under the name of Ammonios Hermeiou (d. c. 520 AD). While claiming to report ancient opinions on the principles of the universe, it is an original Arabic composition.

10 Ulrich (1989: 124). For the Neoplatonic reception of Plutarch, see Simonetti's chapter in this volume.

11 We have slightly modified Dodge's (1970: 611) translation.

12 A Syriac version of *Self-training* survives. Rohlfs (1968: 176–177) argues that the lost Greek text was authored shortly after Plutarch's lifetime (second or third century).

St. Catherine's Monastery testifies that the four texts circulated together in Syriac from at least the seventh century (see Rigolio in this volume); however, *The soul* is attributed there to an anonymous philosopher.<sup>13</sup> Quotations of these works in the historian Mubashshir ibn Fātik's (eleventh century) gnōmōlogy *Choice wise sayings and fine statements* indicate that this Syriac manuscript was translated into Arabic (at least partly), probably after the ninth century in the region of Palestine and the Sinai.<sup>14</sup> Besides Mubashshir, no other Arabic author appears to cite *How to profit from your enemies*, *On the control of anger* and *Self-Training*, so these ethical treatises did not achieve popularity in the Islamicate tradition as they did in the Greek and Syriac traditions.

In contrast, the *Doctrines of the philosophers* circulated widely in Arabic, as the next section will show. Ibn al-Nadīm notes that the Christian Qusṭā ibn Lūqā (d. c. 912–913), an associate of Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq (d. 873/877) from what is now Lebanon, translated the text. While no information is given in the *Catalogue* about the source and target languages of the translation, an Arabic version of *Doctrines of the philosophers* attributed to Qusṭā survives. From a study of the extant translation, Daiber (1980: 14) concludes that Qusṭā likely rendered his Arabic version directly from the Greek. Syriacisms in the translation led Daiber (1980: 12–14) to hypothesise that Qusṭā may have drawn on his knowledge of Syriac in translating certain Greek words into Arabic; nonetheless, Qusṭā does not seem to have made a Syriac intermediary, as was often the practice in Ḥunayn's workshop.<sup>15</sup>

Ibn al-Nadīm's remarks suggest that Qusṭā was the first to translate the *Doctrines of the philosophers* into Arabic, but citations in Gabriel Ibn Nūḥ's (*fl. 847–62*) *Book of proofs and reflection* and a Gotha manuscript (MS orient. A 1161) reveal that there were earlier attempts.<sup>16</sup> The citations in these sources differ linguistically, and therefore appear to come from distinct translations. The use of the suffix “-iqūn” in the transcription of *Stoīkoi (ustuwāniqūna)* in one of Gabriel's quotations indicates that his translation may have been based on a Persian intermediary, because the ending represents the middle Persian

<sup>13</sup> On this manuscript, see Rigolio (2013). Rigolio (2013: 368) identifies *The soul* with Plutarch's fragmentary *On the soul* (Lamprias' catalogue 209). Cf. Arzhanov (2013: 321), who argues that this text is identifiable with the gnōmōlogy in MS Sinai 16.

<sup>14</sup> For these quotations, see Badawī (1958: 319–321). On the dating of the Arabic translation of MS Sinai 16, see Arzhanov (2013: 321–322).

<sup>15</sup> On the importance of Syriac in the Graeco-Arabic translation movement, see Takahashi (2015).

<sup>16</sup> The *Book of proofs and reflection* is attributed in some manuscripts to al-Jāḥiẓ (776–869); on this work, see Davidson (1987: 219–220).

“-ik”.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, the way some Greek terms were transcribed in the Gotha manuscript’s excerpts hints that the anonymous author used an Arabic translation made from a Syriac intermediary.<sup>18</sup> These translations demonstrate that speakers of Persian, Syriac and Arabic were interested in the *Doctrines of the philosophers* from an early period of the Graeco-Arabic translation movement. We will now explore some reasons for this diverse appeal.

## 2      Reading Pseudo-Plutarch

As was shown in the first part of this chapter, the name of Plutarch was mainly associated in the Islamicate world with the *Doctrines of the philosophers*, a work that describes Greek cosmologies from the Pre-Socratics to the Stoics. In this section, we will examine certain Arabic writers’ reception of this text. Hans Daiber edited all the known Arabic excerpts of the *Doctrines of the philosophers*, and showed that the text was very influential in the ninth and tenth centuries.<sup>19</sup> It circulated among not only philosophers but also scientists, doxographers and theologians. As Daiber noted, the most substantial Arabic excerpts from the *Doctrines of the philosophers* are found in a book written by the group of alchemists writing under the name Jābir ibn Ḥayyān, which is entitled *Treatise of attainment* (*Kitāb al-Hāsil*).<sup>20</sup> Ps-Jābir reproduces seven chapters (*Plac. philos. IV, 2–6 and I, 25–26*) that deal with the definition of the soul and the notion of necessity, respectively.<sup>21</sup> Among doxographers, ps.-Sijistānī’s *Selection from the cabinet of wisdom* (*Muntakhab Ṣiwān al-Hikma*, c. 985–1030), a witness to a lost collection of Greek and Arabic biographical and gnomological material, includes numerous passages from the *Doctrines of the philosophers*.<sup>22</sup> The encyclopaedist Muṭahhar b. Tāhir al-Maqdisī also displays an interest in philosophy in his *Book of creation and history* (*Kitāb al-Bad' wa al-Ta'rīkh*, c. 966) by quoting several passages of the *Doctrines of the philosophers*. The *Doctrines of the philosophers* also exerted influence beyond the ninth and tenth centuries: for example, quotations of it appear in the *Medical garden* (*Kitāb al-Rawda' al-Tibbīya*) of Ibn Bukhtishū‘ (d. 1055) and in the *Book on religions and sects* (*Kitāb al-Milal wa al-Nihāl*) of Shahrastānī (d. 1153).

<sup>17</sup> Daiber (1980: 399).

<sup>18</sup> Pietruschka (1984: 21).

<sup>19</sup> Daiber (1980: 80–85).

<sup>20</sup> Daiber (1980: 85).

<sup>21</sup> Kraus (1942: 339).

<sup>22</sup> On this text, see Gutas (1982).

The study of the reception of the *Doctrines of the philosophers* in Arabic philosophy is at an early stage; the introduction and notes of Daiber's edition still require a thorough analysis. When this study is accomplished, it will contribute to a better understanding of the beginning of Arabic philosophy. We can only make an attempt here at a concise overview of the reception and influence of the *Doctrines of the philosophers*. The earliest Arabic excerpts from this Plutarchan work can be found in the *Book of opinions and religions* (*Kitāb al-Ārā' wa al-Diyānāt*) by the Imamite scholar and theologian al-Nawbakhtī (c. 850–c. 920 AD). While this book is lost, its citation of two fragments of *Doctrines of the philosophers* is attested in two intermediary sources.<sup>23</sup> Of the forty works that are attributed to al-Nawbakhtī, until recently, only his *Book on Shi'i Sects* was known to survive.<sup>24</sup> Marwan Rashed, however, recently identified al-Nawbakhtī as the author of a commentary on Aristotle's *On generation and corruption*, and provided an edition and translation of it.<sup>25</sup> Rashed establishes that al-Nawbakhtī contributed to the Aristotelian turn taken by *kalām* (i.e. Islamic theology) by adapting an Aristotelian ontology of the sensible world. The *Doctrines of the philosophers* may have influenced al-Nawbakhtī in his adaptation of Aristotelian philosophy, as the three excerpts of the text quoted by him conceptualise God as the world's intellect.<sup>26</sup>

A contemporary of al-Nawbakhtī, the famous physician and philosopher Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, seems to have benefited greatly from the *Doctrines of the philosophers*. In the rest of this section, our focus will be on the Arabic reception of the *Doctrines of the philosophers* in the writings of al-Rāzī. The aim of our analysis is two-fold: firstly, to acquire a better understanding of the reception of the *Doctrines of the philosophers* during the early stages of Arabic philosophy; and secondly to stress the importance of the influence of the *Doctrines of the philosophers* on the writings of Abū Bakr al-Rāzī. We have found new evidence of al-Rāzī's knowledge of this treatise in his *Abridgment* of Galen's treatise *On the therapeutic method*. In an introductory chapter, al-Rāzī informs his reader that he has read and summarised the *Doctrines of the philosophers*:

He (the emir Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn 'Alī) saw the book *On the opinions of the philosophers regarding nature* by Plutarch (*Kitāb Flūṭarkhus fī al-Ārā' al-tabi'īya*), and asked me to revise and correct it. I produced a

<sup>23</sup> See Ibn al-Jawzī, *The devil's deceptions* (*Talbīs Iblīs*), 45, 6–8 and 8f; and Ibn Abī al-Hadid, *Commentary on the peak of eloquence* (*Sharḥ nahj al-balāgha*), iv, 231. On these sources, see Daiber (1980: 81).

<sup>24</sup> Ed. Ritter (1931).

<sup>25</sup> Rashed (2015).

<sup>26</sup> *Plac. philos.* 1.3.21; 1.3.25; and 1.6.1.

work that I hope suited him, and suited everyone who loves knowledge and wants to know the truth. Then, the books of the great Galen were discussed, as well as the *Doubts* that I had raised against him. So, he asked me to look into each one of them and to gather and summarise their topics, leaving aside what was superfluous, explaining what was obscure, and adding what was missing.<sup>27</sup>

Al-Rāzī's *Abridgment* of ps.-Plutarch's *Doctrines of the philosophers* seems to be listed by al-Bīrūnī under the title *His abridgment of Plutarch's treatise (Talkhīsuhu li-kitāb Flūṭarkhus)*.<sup>28</sup>

References to the *Doctrines of the philosophers* are found in several of al-Rāzī's writings, especially in his treatise *On metaphysics* (*Kitāb fī-mā bād al-ṭabī'a*). This work is dialectical in two different respects. First, it is based on the received opinions of previous philosophers and physicians. Second, these opinions are arranged so as to be set in opposition to one another and to answer each other's claims. Al-Rāzī's authorship of *On metaphysics* has been questioned, because this treatise is not quoted in al-Bīrūnī's bibliography. According to Paul Kraus, it was part of a larger treatise by al-Rāzī, namely either *Physics* (*Fī sam' al-kiyān*)<sup>29</sup> or *On the opinions on nature*.<sup>30</sup> As has been noted, al-Rāzī's treatise *On the opinions on nature* may be identical to his *Abridgement* of ps.-Plutarch's *Doctrines of the philosophers*. Thus, that al-Rāzī had access to the *Doctrines of the philosophers* and even abridged it, and that the *Doctrines of the philosophers* strongly influenced the treatise *On metaphysics*, supports al-Rāzī's authorship of it.<sup>31</sup>

The influence of the *Doctrines of the philosophers* is particularly visible in this treatise's discussion of cosmology. The question whether the world is created or eternal is central to al-Rāzī's cosmological system, which is based on five principles: God, the soul, matter, eternal space and eternal time.<sup>32</sup> In a polemical treatise targeted against Galen, the *Doubts about Galen*, al-Rāzī criticises Aristotle's argument on the eternity of the world in *On the Heavens*,<sup>33</sup> as

<sup>27</sup> Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, *Abridgment of Galen's On the therapeutic method*, Madrid, Escorial, MS árabe 801, fol. 3b.

<sup>28</sup> Al-Bīrūnī (1936: 16).

<sup>29</sup> Al-Bīrūnī (1936: n. 57). Al-Rāzī mentions this treatise in his *Doubts about Galen* (Muḥaqiq 1993: 30).

<sup>30</sup> Flügel (1871–72: 301).

<sup>31</sup> Al-Rāzī's treatise *On metaphysics* has been edited by Paul Kraus (1939), and translated into Italian by Lucchetta (1987).

<sup>32</sup> On Rāzī's five principles, see Kraus (1939: 191–216).

<sup>33</sup> Aristotle, *On the heavens* 1.3.

it is recounted in Galen's fragmentary *On demonstration*.<sup>34</sup> In this context, the last section of *On metaphysics* is of great interest for reconstructing Rāzī's anti-Aristotelian position. It shows that the *Doctrines of the philosophers* provided al-Rāzī with an atomistic counter-point to Aristotle on cosmological issues such as the possible existence of multiple worlds, unlimited spatial extension, and extra-mundane void. One of al-Rāzī's five principles, absolute space, seems related to the discussion of an extra-mundane void.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, on a textual level, a close reading of this section suggests that the Arabic version of *Doctrines of the philosophers* may have circulated with a Greek commentary, which no longer survives in either Greek or Arabic.<sup>36</sup>

In this cosmological discussion, there occurs the only explicit reference to Plutarch in *On metaphysics*. Here, al-Rāzī draws attention to two issues that problematise the Aristotelian position: the possibility of multiple worlds and of the existence of an extra-mundane void. Concerning the possible existence of multiple worlds, al-Rāzī quotes a passage that is ascribed to the atomist philosopher Metrodorus,<sup>37</sup> the forerunner of Epicurus:

Concerning what Plutarch relates about philosophers who believed that the worlds are infinite in number, he relates about Metrodorus that, in order to support this thesis, he gives the following argument: it is absurd that one shaft of wheat grow in an infinite field, and [it is absurd] that one world come into being in the limitless.<sup>38</sup>

Unlimited space necessarily leads to the possibility of multiple and even infinite worlds. Al-Rāzī identifies Plutarch as his source, and the passage has significant correspondences to the Arabic version of the *Doctrines of the philosophers*. After this passage, and before addressing one of Aristotle's arguments against the plurality of worlds (*On the heavens*, 276b8–18),<sup>39</sup> al-Rāzī formulates a logical objection against Metrodorus:

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<sup>34</sup> On these passages, see Koetschet (2015: 167–198).

<sup>35</sup> On absolute space, see Kraus (1939: 198–199).

<sup>36</sup> For this argument, see Pinès (1963: 193–209).

<sup>37</sup> On Metrodorus of Chio, see Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of eminent philosophers* ix. 58, and Englert (2008).

<sup>38</sup> Kraus (1939: 132). Cf. *Plac. philos.* 1.5.4.

<sup>39</sup> Aristotle, *On the heavens* 276b8–18. *On the Heavens* was translated into Arabic by the time of al-Rāzī; on the Arabic version of this text, see Flügel (1871–72: 250). See also the edition of Badawī (1961).

This argument, if it were correct, would only be efficient against those who consider that things are endless, and that the world, while it is one of those things, is [nevertheless] unique. Moreover, it is possible that there exists a field where there are shafts of wheat, but also [things] other than [shafts of wheat]. Is it possible, then, that there exist worlds and [things] other than [worlds]? If Metrodorus answers yes, he renounces his thesis that things [consist in] infinite worlds. If he says no, he contradicts his initial position.<sup>40</sup>

Did al-Rāzī find this objection in another Greek or Arabic source, or did he author it himself? Shlomo Pinès admits that there is no definitive answer to this question, but he notes that it is consistent with the context of Greek atomism.<sup>41</sup> After this passage, al-Rāzī turns to the question of the possible existence of an extra-mundane void. Here, al-Rāzī relies on a quotation from Seleucus that also derives from the *Doctrines of the philosophers*. This passage is of great importance in understanding the Arabic reception of the *Doctrines of the philosophers*: (1) it is longer than the version in the Greek and Arabic source texts, and (2) it is also followed by an objection that suggests the presence of another source. Al-Rāzī writes:

According to what he [i.e. Plutarch] relates about him, Seleucus has argued in favor of the infinity of the world with the following argument: if the world is finite, is it limited by something, or by nothingness? If it is limited by something, then this is in agreement with our position. If it is limited by nothingness, it should also be possible that it is applied against the nothingness and that it is in contact with it, inasmuch as it is limited by it.<sup>42</sup>

In this passage, Seleucus bases his belief in the infinity of the world on the impossibility of conceiving a limit to the world. In the Greek original, as in Qusṭā's translation, the corresponding passage mentions Seleucus' belief in the infinity of the world, but does not provide any argument in support of it.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, this quotation is followed by a counter-argument:

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<sup>40</sup> Kraus (1939: 132).

<sup>41</sup> Pinès (1963: 196).

<sup>42</sup> Kraus (1939: 133).

<sup>43</sup> *Plac. philos.* 2.1.4.

They said: if a spectator stands at an extremity of the limits of the world, does he see something or would he not see anything? If he sees something, then it agrees with our theory. If he does not see anything, then is it possible for him to extend his arm or not? If he says no, what prevents him from doing so?

Again, it is unclear whether al-Rāzī found this counter-argument in another source or authored it himself. This last hypothesis seems unlikely, because the above argument could be directed against al-Rāzī's notion of absolute space. More importantly, the metaphor of a spectator standing at the limit of the world can be paralleled in other Greek sources.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, it seems probable that al-Rāzī drew some of his information from other Greek sources, which are now lost.

The examples of the two quotations of Metrodorus and Seleucus from the *Doctrines of the philosophers* in al-Rāzī's text show similar arguments, which likely derive from the Greek tradition, which circulated in Arabic in conjunction with the *Doctrines of the philosophers*. They demonstrate that the reception of the *Doctrines of the philosophers* in Arabic was not solely represented by the translation of the treatise but also by commentaries and possibly additional testimonies.

The influence of the *Doctrines of the philosophers* on Rāzī's writings goes beyond these testimonia, especially with regard to *On metaphysics*. In many ways, the treatise *On metaphysics* can be interpreted as a critical adaptation of the *Doctrines of the philosophers*.<sup>45</sup> Both texts seem to be closely related in their methodology and their subject matter. That is to say, both texts are doxographic in nature.<sup>46</sup> Although al-Rāzī's treatise is not purely doxographic, Paul Kraus stressed the absence of specific Razian concepts, such as the distinction between time and eternity and between relative and absolute space. According to him, the dialectical nature of the treatise, which is based on the dynamic opposition of opinions, can account for these omissions. In his *Doubts about Galen*, al-Rāzī also creates a dialogue between Galen and himself, and sometimes confronts Galen with alternative positions that did not receive the treatment they deserved on Galen's part. It can be hypothesised that al-Rāzī followed a similar approach in the *Doubts about Proklos*, a lost treatise listed by

<sup>44</sup> Lucchetta (1987: 322) gives the following examples: Eudemus of Rhodes (fourth c. BC), *Physics* fragment 30 and Pl., *Phaedo* 109e.

<sup>45</sup> On the influence of *Doctrines of the philosophers* on *On metaphysics*, see Lucchetta (1987: 330–334).

<sup>46</sup> On doxographies in Greek and Arabic, see Mansfeld and Runia (1997), (2010), and (2011) and Strohmaier (2011).

al-Bīrūnī.<sup>47</sup> In both texts, al-Rāzī stands in a dialectical tradition represented, for example, by Alexander of Aphrodisias' *Questions*.

Another point of comparison is the subject matter of both texts. Notwithstanding its title, the treatise *On metaphysics* deals primarily with physical issues, as is the case with the *Doctrines of the philosophers*. The definition of the scope of natural philosophy is similarly broad in both texts. In the *Doctrines of the philosophers*, ps.-Plutarch explains that, according to Aristotle, philosophy is separated into two branches (theoretical and practical), and that all the issues on essence and existence in general fall under theoretical philosophy. *On metaphysics* and *Doctrines of the philosophers* share this conception of nature presented by Aristotle in the second book of the *Physics* (192b8–31). The author of the *Doctrines of the philosophers* explains that his objective is to investigate “what is nature and what are its powers” (1, 1, 1), and he begins with Aristotle's opinion on the topic. However, ps.-Plutarch does not endorse the kind of critical approach that al-Rāzī follows in his treatise, where the Aristotelian positions are systematically undermined by their confrontation with opposite views.

A quotation found in another treatise by Rāzī bears witness to the complexity of the reception of *Doctrines of the philosophers* in the Arabic medical and philosophical tradition. This passage is found in a treatise entitled *On passive homosexuality* (*Risāla fī al-Ubna*).<sup>48</sup> At the beginning of this treatise, al-Rāzī supports the thesis that the sex of the child depends on the dominance of either male or female semen.<sup>49</sup> This position was rejected by Galen in *On semen*.<sup>50</sup> This statement is followed by a passage that examines the question “Why are mules barren?”. In three identical manuscripts,<sup>51</sup> there is a quotation from “another treatise” that is absent from the other witnesses. This long quotation derives from the Arabic translation of the *Doctrines of the philosophers*.<sup>52</sup> According to Franz Rosenthal, this addition may not be original to the treatise but was inserted by the copyist from another treatise by al-Rāzī.<sup>53</sup> Whether

47 Al-Bīrūnī (1936: n. 126).

48 Al-Rāzī, *On passive homosexuality* (*Risāla fī al-Ubna*), Tehran, Majlis Shūrā 4679; trans. by Rosenthal (1978: 45–60).

49 Al-Rāzī, *On passive homosexuality* (*Risāla fī al-Ubna*), Tehran, Majlis Shūrā 4679, fol. 123a; trad. Rosenthal (1978: 52).

50 Galen, *On semen* (4.631, 641K = 185, 178 sq De Lacy). Here, Galen attributes the theory that one sperms dominates over the other to Straton.

51 Rosenthal gives the following references: Teheran, Majlis Shūrā 352 Tabatai, Teheran Majlis Shūrā 6201/5, Tehran Sanā 360. We were able to get a copy of Tehran Majlis Shūrā 4679, which contains the treatise and seems to be listed under another shelfmark.

52 *Plac. philos.* 5.14.1–3.

53 Rosenthal (1978: 47).

this is the case or not, this quotation shows that on the topic of reproduction, which is central to al-Rāzī's medical thought,<sup>54</sup> *Doctrines of the philosophers* played an important role in his engagement with previous traditions.

### 3 Conclusion

This short overview has provided an outline of the "Arabic Plutarch". In doing so, it has shown the multi-layered identity of this character. Indeed, most writings ascribed to Plutarch in the Islamicate tradition are *pseudepigrapha*. Ps.-Plutarch is nonetheless an important figure in the Islamicate tradition. The *Doctrines of the philosophers*, in particular, was a powerful model for doxographers. Our focus on the reception of this treatise in Abū Bakr al-Rāzī's treatise *On metaphysics* has shown that *Doctrines of the philosophers* seems to have influenced al-Rāzī's critical engagement with the Aristotelian tradition on several topics. On a more general level, the study of the reception of *Doctrines of the philosophers* in early Arabic philosophy (ninth-tenth century) will facilitate a better understanding of the debates that would lead in the tenth century to a major Aristotelian turn in philosophical writings.

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54 See, for example, Muhaqqiq (1993: 69–70) and Labib (2005: 182).

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## **PART 4**

### *Renaissance*

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## Leonardo Bruni and Plutarch

*Marianne Pade*

I plan to translate all of Plutarch's *Lives* into Latin, if my other work will allow it, and renew the fame and glory of great men: it will be useful to me, because I shall become acquainted with the Greeks, and at the same time it will be useful for our countrymen.\*<sup>1</sup>

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This passage from Leonardo Bruni's (1370–1444) preface to his Latin translation of Plutarch's *Life of Antony* (1404/1405) shows the enthusiasm of those heady times when – “with the return of Greek to the West”<sup>2</sup> – a new world seemed to open up. Bruni and other like-minded Italian intellectuals devoured all they could lay their hands on of that enormous part of the Greek literary heritage that had not been accessible in the Latin West during the Middle Ages. Plutarch was an early favourite, especially the *Lives*. Among other things, they were a treasure grove of new sources for Roman history that Bruni and other humanists eagerly made use of.

### 1 Plutarch in the Latin West before 1400

Still, one could ask, why Plutarch? Though he is mentioned briefly in Latin authors such as Gellius, Macrobius, Arnobius, St Jerome and Cassiodorus, during most of the Middle Ages he was virtually unknown in Western Europe. His name began to attract attention when the twelfth-century writer John

\* This contribution is based on two chapters in my 2007 monograph on *The Reception of Plutarch in Fifteenth-Century Italy*; cf. Pade (2007: 1.61–87 and 127–165).

<sup>1</sup> *habemus quidem in animo hos omnes Plutarchi uiros, si per occupationes nostras licebit, in Latinum conuertere et famam ac gloriam summorum uirorum renouare, ut simul cum utilitate nostra, quam ex Graecorum cognitione percepimus, nostrorum quoque hominum sit coniuncta utilitas*, L. Bruni, preface to translation of *Antonius*, ed. in Pade (2007: II.153).

<sup>2</sup> For this, see Maisano-Rollo (eds) (2002).

of Salisbury quoted the so-called *The education of Trajan (Institutio Traiani)* in his *Policraticus*. The (probably spurious) *Institutio* is a didactic treatise on the theory of government allegedly written by Plutarch for his imperial pupil Trajan.<sup>3</sup> John's first quote from the treatise, a letter from Plutarch to Trajan, was often transmitted independently and thus helped make Plutarch's name more familiar – even if he was mentioned in a role he never had.<sup>4</sup> Knowledge of Plutarch took a step forward in the fourteenth century at the papal court at Avignon, an important centre of learning that also attracted Greek scholars. One of them was Simon Atumanus, bishop of Gerace in Calabria after 1348 and later Latin archbishop of Thebes. During his stay in Avignon in the 1370s he produced a Latin version of Plutarch's *On the control of anger (De cohibenda ira)*.<sup>5</sup> Francesco Petrarca, who spent many years in Avignon, may well have known Atumanus. Though he had no Greek himself, he collected available information on Greek literature. He several times refers to Plutarch, most often as Trajan's teacher. At the time, he could have found this piece of information in many writers, for instance in the *Life of Plutarch* included in the *On famous men (De viris illustribus)* of his friend Giovanni Colonna.<sup>6</sup>

Coluccio Salutati, in many ways the leader of the early Florentine humanists, became an important figure in the early dissemination of Plutarch's works in the West. Born in 1331, Salutati became chancellor of Florence in 1375, a position he held until his death in 1406.<sup>7</sup> At one point he acquired a copy of Simon's translation of *On the control of anger*. Appalled at Simon's Latin, he decided to write a new, more elegant version of it, which is still extant.<sup>8</sup> Salutati's name is connected to yet another early translation of Plutarch. In the 1380s the Aragonese Juan Fernández de Heredia commissioned a number of translations from the work of Greek historians, among them Plutarch's *Lives*. We still possess an Aragonese version of 39 *Lives*, made from an intermediary translation into Demotic Greek. When Salutati heard of the Aragonese *Lives*, he planned to have them translated into Latin. That never happened, but a Tuscan version of them still exists in a number of manuscripts, made perhaps at Salutati's request in order to serve as the basis for his projected Latin one.<sup>9</sup> So, by the end of the fourteenth century, when Salutati invited the Greek scholar and

<sup>3</sup> For literature on the *Policraticus*, see the bibliography in Kloft/Kerner (1992: 127–130). The latest edition of the *Institutio Traiani* is by Kloft, (1992: 8–31).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Elsmann (1994: 112–134 and 249–275); and Pade (1999: 63–65).

<sup>5</sup> DiStefano (1968: 15–16). On the early study of Greek, see Weiss (1977).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Zucchelli (1998: 224–226).

<sup>7</sup> For the life of Salutati, see Witt (1976, 1983 and 2000: 292–337).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Salutati's preface in Salutati (1891–1911: II.480–483).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Salutati (1891–1911: II.301, n. 4) and Pade (2007: 76–87).

diplomat Manuel Chrysoloras to teach Greek in Florence, interest in Plutarch and not least in the *Lives* was already growing. Chrysoloras used Plutarch in his teaching, and a number of his students went on to publish Latin translations of *Lives*, among them Leonardo Bruni.

## 2 Leonardo Bruni

Ever since Hans Baron's writings on Florentine humanism around 1400,<sup>10</sup> Bruni has been considered the embodiment of the "civic humanist", a man who, like Cicero, was both statesman and man of letters, and who used his classical learning for the benefit of his fellow countrymen and to serve his adopted city of Florence. As a young man he was a follower and close collaborator of Coluccio Salutati, and as a student of Chrysoloras he became fervently interested in Greek. In 1405 Bruni left Florence for Rome, where he was appointed apostolic secretary. He was to remain at the papal court until 1415, when he returned to Florence, and he was Florentine chancellor from 1427 until his death.<sup>11</sup> He was the most widely read contemporary writer during the fifteenth century, due to both his original writings and the quality and Latin style of his many translations.<sup>12</sup>

In the preface to the *Antonius*, Bruni said that translating the entire corpus of Plutarch's *Lives* would make him acquainted with the Greeks. Had he done so, it would have, but in the end Bruni's Greek scholarship first and foremost intended to restore and renew Latin culture.<sup>13</sup> This tendency is clear in a number of his translations and in his historical compilation, the *The first Punic war* (*Commentaria de primo bello punico*). The work is based on Polybius, another new source for Roman history, but Bruni corrected Polybius' account and made it less anti-Roman by adding portions of, amongst others, Zonaras, Thucydides, and Strabo.<sup>14</sup> Most of Bruni's translations from Plutarch are of the lives of outstanding public figures from the Roman Republic: Mark Antony, the Younger Cato, Aemilius Paulus, the Gracchi, Quintus Sertorius, and Cicero in the *Cicero novus*, his adaptation of the *Life of Cicero*. His translation of the *Life of Pyrrhus*, the king of Epirus, was surely motivated by his interest in Roman history, even if its eponymous subject was not a Roman. His *Demosthenes* was intended as a

<sup>10</sup> Baron (1955 and 1966). Baron's thesis and his portrayal of Bruni has been much discussed, cf. Hankins (1995, 1996a and 2000).

<sup>11</sup> For Bruni's life, see Vasoli (1972) and Griffiths *et al.* (1987: 21–46).

<sup>12</sup> For the manuscript diffusion of Bruni's writings, see Hankins (1997).

<sup>13</sup> Hankins (2002: 192).

<sup>14</sup> Reynolds (1954); cf. Hankins (2002: 189–190).

foil for the *Cicero novus*, the new life of Cicero was meant to reverse Plutarch's judgement that the Greek orator was the superior one.

### 3      *The Antonius and the Role of the Translator (1404–1405)*

In 1404 Bruni heard that his friend Niccolò Niccoli owned or had access to a book containing the *Lives of Antony* and *Cicero*, presumably meaning the Plutarchan lives of these men in Greek. Bruni was immediately eager to borrow it and had probably already decided to translate one or both *Lives* into Latin.<sup>15</sup> The *Antonius* is one of Bruni's earliest translations and his first from Plutarch. It is dedicated to Coluccio Salutati, whose status made it entirely appropriate that Bruni's preface should contain an interesting discussion of Latin humanist studies, seen in the light of the many new Greek texts that flooded into Italy in those years. Echoing the opening chapters of Cicero's *On ends* (*De finibus* 1.1–2), Bruni insists on the ability of the Latin language and literature to rival Greek. However, reading Plutarch he became aware that neither the deeds nor even the names of the men that had once secured Italy's glory throughout the world were known any longer in the Latin West, a loss he set out to remedy.

Another important theme of the preface is the role of the translator, who is never praised for his work, Bruni says, but only blamed for the faults of the text, whether or not they be due to his shortcomings as a translator. The author, on the other hand, is credited with everything that is good. Bruni admits that there may be more ways of saying a thing in Greek than in Latin, but claims proudly that Latinity has its own elegance and ornaments, sufficient for every purpose. He is well aware that translation is considered less meritorious because it does not involve *inventio*, original creativity. But that is also the case with history. In fact, Bruni does not see the difference between reporting another person's deeds and reporting his words; indeed the latter is probably more difficult. Translation is not an automatic conversion of sememes from one language into another, but an art that involves its own *inventio*.

### 4      *Cato the Younger and Imitative Translation (1405–after November 1407)*

Bruni next turned to *Cato the Younger*. The personality of its eponymous hero would be likely to attract the attention of Salutati's group that

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<sup>15</sup> Gualdo Rosa (1994: 121).

celebrated Florence's non-monarchical constitution by comparing it to the Roman Republic. Marcus Porcius Cato was Caesar's proud, aristocratic opponent, who fought heroically for a cause he knew to be lost, the free Republic. He preferred suicide at Utica in 46 BC to the humiliation of having to throw himself at Caesar's mercy. The last thing he read before dying was Plato's *Phaedo* – which Bruni translated just a few years before the *Cato*. The richest source for Cato's life is Plutarch's biography, but Cato was well remembered in the Latin tradition too, becoming a symbol of virtue and being honoured by Dante, as Bruni recalls in the *Dialogi (Dialogues to Pier Paolo Vergerio, 1401/1407)*.

Bruni started translating the *Life* while he was still at Florence, as it appears from a letter to Niccolò Niccoli of August 1406: "I understand you want the *Story of Cato* and I'd willingly do it, but I'd like you to know what has delayed its publication up to now. You know, surely, since you were with me at the time, how quickly I translated it into Latin ..."<sup>16</sup> This first *ex tempore* translation must have undergone serious revision before it was published. Long passages of the text as we have it now are carefully modelled on Valerius Maximus where he was Plutarch's source or where the two writers used a parallel source. Bruni's rendering sometimes owes more to Valerius than to Plutarch. Regarding this aspect in particular he is perhaps the first to apply what was to become a recurrent method in fifteenth-century translation: in the attempt to render the style of the Greek originals, the translator would not only use classical Latin idioms and syntax, he would also quarry a Latin text written in the same genre as the Greek original.<sup>17</sup> In the case of Plutarch, there was no obvious model to follow, as no ancient Latin author imitated Plutarch's biographical style. However, when Plutarch quotes Latin writers or deals with events for which we also have Latin sources, his humanist translators would regularly use words or phrases from these Latin writers, even if by doing so they deviated somewhat from their source-text.<sup>18</sup>

## 5      *Pyrrhus and Aemilius Paulus: the Expansion of Rome (1408–09)*

Plutarch's *Pyrrhus* contains a unique record of a most critical phase of Rome's expansion in Southern Italy in the early second century BC. Bruni's translation

<sup>16</sup> *Catonis Historiam te cupere intelligo. Faciam equidem libenti animo: sed unam rem volo non ignores, quae adhuc me quominus eam ederem remorata fuit. Scis tu profecto, qui mihi per illud tempus affuisti, quanta cum celeritate illa sit a nobis traducta ...*, Bruni (1741: x.19, ed. Mehus). English translation adapted from Hankins (1990: 374).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Pade (1985).

<sup>18</sup> Pade (1994: 191–194). On Bruni and stylistic imitation, see Hankins (1987: 211–212).

of the *Life* has been variously dated, but it was probably finished no later than 1408.<sup>19</sup>

In the early years of the fifteenth century the relative merits of ancient commanders were a hotly debated topic in humanist circles. In his preface to the Latin version of Plutarch's *On the fortune and virtue of Alexander the Great* (*De Al. magn. fort.*, before 1410),<sup>20</sup> Iacopo Angeli mentions a contemporary debate at Florence regarding Caesar and Alexander, and actually a number of the *Lives* translated during these years contain chapters on the issue, for example, the *Sertorius*, the *Flamininus* and the *Pyrrhus*. So apart from Pyrrhus' importance for Roman history, it seems likely that his role as a protagonist in the contest for the title *maximus imperator*, supreme commander, may have aroused Bruni's interest at an early date.

Bruni's *Pyrrhus* is one of the few examples of translations from the Greek achieving the status of original Latin literature. Two excerpts from the translation are often found in anthologies of Latin texts, one from Appius Claudius' speech to the senate (*Pyrrh.* 19.1–5) and the other containing the letter sent by the Romans Fabricius and Aemilius to Pyrrhus to warn him of treason (*Pyrrh.* 21.3–4).<sup>21</sup>

The translation of the *Aemilius Paulus* is almost contemporary. The victor of the Battle of Pydna in which he defeated King Perseus of Macedonia in 168 BC, Aemilius Paulus was praised by later historiographers as an example of the upright patrician, unpretentious, severe, and honest. When Bruni dedicated the translation to another patrician, the Venetian Pietro Miani, whose name was Latinised as Petrus Aemilianus († 1433),<sup>22</sup> he took care to emphasise not only the similarity of Miano's name, especially in Latin, to that of the ancient Roman, but also that of their characters.

Whatever the motive that made Bruni translate the *Aemilius Paulus* itself, it must have been irresistible to dedicate it to a latter-day namesake, or even descendant, as Bruni calls him in the preface. Here we find a rather facetious instance of the *topos* that one should imitate illustrious models of the past. The Miani claimed to be descendants of the *gens Aemilia* and could thus actually boast Roman ancestry. Accordingly, Bruni had translated the *Aemilius Paulus*, so that the sons of Miani could model themselves on this Roman paragon. Perhaps for once the letter of dedication was in fact intended primarily for

<sup>19</sup> Pade (2007: I.151–152). For an early dating of this life, see also Hankins (1994: 166).

<sup>20</sup> On this see Abbamonte-Stok (2011: 217) and the critical edition in Angeli 2017.

<sup>21</sup> A slightly different version of the speech is Quadrigarius *Hist.* 41 quoted by Gellius (3.8). Cf. Pade (1999).

<sup>22</sup> For Miani, see Moro (1993). Edition of preface in Pade (2007: II.95–97).

the dedicatee; it is extant in a single copy, whereas we possess 86 manuscripts of the translation itself, which was quickly seen as a useful supplement to Livy, as is evident from a manuscript containing his books on the Macedonian wars. On the fly-leaf we find an excerpt from the *Aemilius Paulus* on “the family and origin of Philip and his son Perses”.<sup>23</sup>

## 6      The *Gracchi* and *Sertorius*: the Decline of the Roman Republic (1410)

In 1410 Bruni translated two *Lives* dealing with events that contributed to and preconditioned the disastrous fall of the Roman Republic, namely, the *Lives* of the Gracchi and Sertorius. As public figures the two Gracchi were symbols of moral virtue and disinterest in personal, economic gain. Using their tribunician power (133 and 123–122 BC) to introduce much-needed reforms, amongst other things of the agrarian laws, they to some degree curbed the powers of the senatorial class. Their offices thus mark the beginning of the dissolution of the ruling oligarchy, whereas the measures taken by their opponents to avoid having to share the privileges of Roman citizenship with other peoples eventually led to the Social War.

For some years during the eighties of the first century BC the colourful Roman general Sertorius managed successfully to oppose the conservative Sulla, holding most of Spain against the Romans, with strong support from the native Lusitanians. According to Plutarch, his bravery, justice, and skill in exploiting local superstition made him immensely popular – his white fawn was regarded as a sign of divine protection. He was murdered in 73 or 72, but he had before that managed to fight even the great Pompey successfully for some years.

The *Sertorius* is dedicated to one of Bruni’s colleagues at the papal court, the apostolic scriptor Antonio Loschi. The letter of dedication is a harsh critique of contemporary Italian warfare: “May I perish if I am not right in judging that, compared to antiquity, our own performance is childish and theatrical: our lack of order, discipline, and military expertise, our cowardly unwillingness to engage in close fight, and our contentment with skirmishes, flights, and pursuits in the manner of boys”.<sup>24</sup> In Bruni’s time, the armies of Italian city states

<sup>23</sup> *Plutarchus de familia et origine philippi et perse filii in uita Pauli Aemylii sic habet*, Vat. lat. 1854, s. xv 2/4, f. 3v.

<sup>24</sup> Edition of preface in Pade (2007: II.115–116), translated in Baron (1966: 374); see also *ibid.*, pp. 373–375 on Bruni’s preoccupation with the citizen-soldier.

largely consisted of mercenaries, a system which he deplored deeply: in his *Laudatio* of 1403 he remembers how in earlier generations the Florentine people themselves went to war and took up arms,<sup>25</sup> and, in his funeral oration for Nanni Strozzi (1428),<sup>26</sup> he praises Strozzi as an example of citizen-soldiership. Bruni returns to the question in the *De militia (On knighthood)*, praising the citizen soldier of the classless *militia* that Romulus created.<sup>27</sup> In the *Lives*, and especially in the *Sertorius*, Bruni read about the efficient armies of ancient Greece and Rome, with which modern soldiership compared very poorly. The letter to Loschi, as well as the translation itself, must be seen in connection with Bruni's dream of reviving a citizen-army.

## 7      *Demosthenes and Cicero novus: the Fight for the Republic (1412–1413)*

Between 1406 and 1412, while he was employed as papal secretary, Bruni produced a number of translations of Demosthenes' speeches and related texts, the so-called *Corpus Demosthenicum*. His 1412 translation of the Plutarchan *Life* in a way illustrates his translations of the Demosthenic speeches; in a number of early manuscripts the *Life* also accompanies the collection.<sup>28</sup> Demosthenes was of course Cicero's admired model, but that was not the only reason for Bruni's interest. The *Corpus Demosthenicum* showed democratic Athens struggling against Philip of Macedonia to maintain her independence, an obvious historical parallel to Florence's plight at the beginning of the fifteenth century, when the city narrowly escaped the fate of Athens through the sudden death of Duke Giangaleazzo Visconti of Milan (1403). However, at the time when Bruno translated the *Demosthenes* it was clear that Milan's expansionist dreams were still intact.<sup>29</sup>

Plutarch paired Demosthenes with Cicero, and Bruni actually intended to translate both *Lives*. As far as we know, it was the only time he contemplated

<sup>25</sup> E.g. *Atque hec fecit populus florentinus nullis extraneis auxiliis, sed ipse militans et pro dignitate atque gloria promptissime certans* ("The Florentines achieved this without any foreign help, fighting bravely themselves for their dignity and glory"), on the conquest of Volterra in 1254, Bruni (1996: 624, ed. Viti).

<sup>26</sup> New edition in Bruni (1996) ed. Daub. For a full analysis of the oration, see Hankins (2000).

<sup>27</sup> See Griffiths *et al.* (1987: 107–111). English translation of the treatise *ibid.* 117–145.

<sup>28</sup> For manuscripts of the translation, see Pade (2007: 11:147–148). See also Hankins (2002: 189). On Bruni's translations of Demosthenes see also Accame Lanzilotta (1986).

<sup>29</sup> For the role of the *Corpus Demosthenicum* in Bruni's œuvre, see Hankins (2002: 191–193).

translating an entire pair; his interest in keeping the parallel form may well be seen as a tribute to the two great statesmen and orators.<sup>30</sup> However, instead of a straightforward translation of the Plutarchan *Life*, Bruni produced the *Cicero novus* (*New life of Cicero*), dedicated to Niccolò Niccoli.<sup>31</sup> Dissatisfied with the existing translation of the *Cicero* (Iacopo Angeli da Scarperia's 1401 translation, which he does not mention), Bruni resolved to make a completely new translation of the *Life*. But Plutarch's *Life* proved unsatisfactory too, leaving out, as it did, important aspects of Cicero's achievements. Moreover, according to Bruni, Plutarch's portrayal of Cicero was not always impartial, because he wanted Demosthenes, the other half of the pair, to emerge as the greater of the two. Bruni therefore resolved to write a new *Life* in accordance with his own judgement and purpose, without relying on Plutarch's account. The result, he emphasised, was not a translation<sup>32</sup> – but still there are passages in the *Cicero novus* that show traces of a revision of Angeli's text rather than an independent translation.<sup>33</sup>

Even so, the *Cicero novus* does in fact depart materially from Plutarch. It includes a wealth of material from other sources, including Cicero's own writings and Sallust's *Catiline*. Bruni's life has sometimes been dismissed as a mere reworking of Plutarch. Hans Baron mainly discussed the section Bruni added on Cicero's literary activity, which in his view confirmed his depiction of Bruni as a "civic humanist".<sup>34</sup> Then in 1980 E.B. Fryde rejected Baron's "civic" reading, maintaining that the *Cicero novus* was the first example of Bruni's commitment to "scientific" history and, moreover, the beginning of humanist historiography.<sup>35</sup> In a more recent study, Gary Ianziti saw Bruni focusing on Cicero's deeds rather than on his moral flaws as explanations for his downfall and concluded that he wrote with "encomiastic prejudice".<sup>36</sup> In my view, Bruni's "encomiastic prejudice", which Ianziti amply documents, by no means contradicts Baron's "civic" reading of the *Cicero novus*; it simply glorifies the prototype of the civic humanist who served his country, the Roman Republic, through direct participation in politics as well as through his scholarship.

Bruni's *Cicero* was an immediate success and its popularity far surpassed that of Plutarch's *Life*. The part where Bruni discussed Cicero's writings was considered especially useful, as the marginal annotations in many manuscripts

<sup>30</sup> For humanist interest in the parallelism of the *Lives*, see Humble (2010).

<sup>31</sup> Now edited in Bruni (1996: 411–499, ed. Viti). Preface in Pade (2007: II.149–150).

<sup>32</sup> I have used Griffiths' English translation of Bruni's preface in Griffiths et al. (1987: 184–185).

<sup>33</sup> Ianziti (2000: 46–47).

<sup>34</sup> Baron (1928: 113–120) and *id.* (1968: 121–122).

<sup>35</sup> Now in Fryde (1983: 33–53).

<sup>36</sup> For summaries of the discussions regarding the *Cicero novus*, see Ianziti (1998 and 2000).

show. The *Cicero novus* not only replaced Angelī's translation of the *Cicero* in the majority of the larger collections of the *Lives* and in most printed editions, it was also generally accepted as the standard life of the Roman.

## 8 Bruni's Biographical Writings

The *Cicero novus* in a way constitutes the end of Bruni's Plutarchan period: his original plan of translating the entire corpus of *Lives* resulted in only seven versions and his *New Life of Cicero*. It can also be said to inaugurate a new beginning, as Bruni's first original work as a writer of biography and intellectual history. In the years to follow Bruni composed three more biographies. The *Life of Aristotle* was completed by April 1430. Some parts follow the structure of Diogenes Laertius' *Life*, which it often refutes using information from other sources, among them Plutarch.<sup>37</sup> James Hankins has pointed to what he calls the "hagiographic" character of Bruni's portrait: the aim was to depict Aristotle not so much as master of logic and dialectic, in accordance with the scholastic tradition, but as a moral and political philosopher who taught men how to regulate society according to rational principles. The *Life* must be seen in connection with Bruni's controversial translations of the *Nicomachean ethics* (1416–1417), the spurious *Economics* (1419–1420), and the *Politics* (1435–1438), in which he consciously avoids the technical philosophical language of the medieval Aristotle, writing instead in an elegant Latin that would make the translations accessible to educated lay people as well as specialists. In the *Life* Bruni praises Aristotle's eloquence, although he knew that many learned men would be surprised to read this praise. But that, he said, was because they had no Greek and knew Aristotle only from inadequate translations.<sup>38</sup> He endeavours to place Aristotle in a social context by discussing his relations with Philip, Demosthenes, Alexander and other pupils. Formally, Bruni's debt is to Suetonius and Diogenes rather than to Plutarch; after a short chronological survey of Aristotle's life taking up less than a quarter of the work, he arranges his subject matter according to subjects or *per species*, as Suetonius described his own method (*Aug.* 9.1). In selecting his material, however, Bruni may have

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Fryde (1983: 33–53 and 1988) and Ianziti (2002). Modern edition in Bruni (1996: 501–529, ed. Viti).

<sup>38</sup> "Certainly his own writings are crammed full of every ornament and figure of speech. This is obvious in his books. I have discovered that certain learned men (who are, however, ignorant of Greek) do not believe my assertion when I recommend Aristotle's eloquence. Accustomed as they are to reading him in adulterated translations, they conclude that he is muddled, obscure and awkward", Griffiths *et al.* (1987: 290).

been influenced by Plutarch's definition of biography (*Alex.* 1.2). Discussing his *Life of Aristotle* with Poggio, Bruni wrote that one should not heap all sorts of information together when writing a *Life*, but only that which is worth noticing.<sup>39</sup>

In the *Lives of Dante and Petrarch* (*Vite di Dante e del Petrarca*), published in 1436, Bruni in a way returns to the Plutarchan model; the two *Lives* are conceived as parallel lives, and they are followed by a *synkrisis/comparatio*. The *Life of Dante*, the more elaborate of the pair, is partly a discussion of specific aspects of Dante's career, for example, his public and private life and literary activity, and partly a chronological narrative; it is thus possible to see traces of both the Suetonian and the Plutarchan biographical model. Part of the explanation, I think, is that Bruni is faced with the difficulty of writing about a person whose most important achievement was literary, not political. To overcome this Bruni discusses the nature of poets and poetic creation; Dante was clearly one of those poets who reached eminence through learning – even though he chose to write in Italian instead of Latin. To Bruni the explanation is not only the lack of Latin eloquence in Dante's time but also the flowering of vernacular poetry. Bruni's life thus becomes an early history of vernacular literature.<sup>40</sup>

In the much shorter *Life of Petrarch* Bruni concentrates even more on the hero's intellectual achievements, especially on Petrarch's role in the revival of Latin letters that led to their present level of excellence. Again Bruni's account becomes a literary or cultural history, but focusing on Latin culture and the political forces that influenced it:

Latin literature went hand in hand with the state of the Roman Republic, because it expanded until the time of Cicero. Afterwards, when the freedom of the Roman people was lost through the rule of the Emperors, who never stopped killing and undoing worthy men, the happy inclination towards study and literature disappeared together with the prosperity of the Roman state.<sup>41</sup>

39 *Non enim omnia in describenda vita sunt congerenda, sed illa dumtaxat quae notione sunt digna* ("Not everything should be mentioned in a life, but only that which is worthy of notion"), Bruni (1741: II.42 ep. VI.3, ed. Mehus).

40 Modern edition in Bruni (1996: 537–560, ed. Viti). Discussion of the work and English translation by David Thompson in Griffiths *et al.* (1987: 59–62 and 85–100). See also Gualdo Rosa (1995).

41 "le lettere e gli studi della lingua latina andassero parimente co' lo stato della repubblica di Roma; però che perfino all'età di Tullio ebbe accrescimento; dipoi, perdita la libertà del popolo romano per la signoria dell'imperadori, i quali non restarono mai d'uccidere e di disfare gl'uomini di pregio, insieme col buono stato della città di Roma perì la buona disposizione degli studi e delle lettere", Bruni (1996: 554–555, ed. Viti).

After that the decline continued until, with the emergence of the free city states in Tuscany and elsewhere, a slow cultural revival began, initially in the form of vernacular poetry and then, with Petrarch, also comprising Latin letters.

The pair is followed by a *comparatio* modelled on Plutarch's *Comparison of Demosthenes and Cicero*, the only example in Plutarch's œuvre of a comparison between two literary figures. Bruni here again reveals his "civic" attitude, because Petrarch's adherence to the ideal of the contemplative life and apparent lack of interest in public office clearly tells against him. Still, his merits as the "father of humanism" are such that the two poets come out more or less as equals.

Bruni's work implicitly praises fifteenth-century humanist culture as much as it praises the two poets. Latin culture, as we have already heard, reached its acme with Cicero during the heyday of the Roman Republic. Petrarch showed the way to stylistic perfection through his imitation of Cicero, a perfection, one assumes, that was actually reached during Bruni's lifetime. Unlike Dante he could not be praised for his participation in public affairs; but he could hardly be blamed for his inactivity, says Bruni in the comparison, as he did not live in a free state with a civic government.<sup>42</sup> Dante, on the other hand, was deficient in Latin culture. Though Bruni does not say so openly, the implication of the comparison must be that it was in republican Florence that the Latin culture and political greatness of Cicero's time could, and did, return. Bruni thus used the structure of his Plutarchan *comparatio* where he discussed both the literary and the civic merits of the two poets, to praise the city in which he himself served as a learned magistrate, just as Cicero had done in his.

Bruni was a student of Plutarch for more than thirty years. In the early decades of the fifteenth century his translations made the *Lives* of some of the great public figures of the Roman Republic accessible to Western readers. Eventually he felt confident enough to revise Plutarch's narrative, as he did in the *New Cicero*, and with his Lives of Dante and Petrarch, he even used Plutarch as a model in his own original writings.

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<sup>42</sup> "... che Dante nella vita activa et civile fu di maggiore pregio che 'l Petrarca, però che nell' armi per la patria et nel governo della repubblica laudabilmente si adoperò. Non si può dire del Petrarca questa parte, però che né in città libera stette, la quale avessi a governare civilmente, ..." Bruni (1996: 559, ed. Viti).

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# Plutarch and Poliziano

*Fabio Stok*

## 1 Poliziano Poet and Philologist

One of the most incisive scholars of Plutarch at the beginning of the age of print was Poliziano. His real name was Angelo Ambrogini, born in 1454 in Montepulciano (Tuscany). The nickname of “Poliziano” was taken from the Latin name of his birthplace, *Mons Politianus*.<sup>1</sup> He was interested in Plutarch’s works throughout his scholarly career as a reader, a philologist and a translator.

When Poliziano was 13, his father was murdered and shortly afterwards his mother sent him to Florence, where his teachers were Marsilio Ficino, Cristoforo Landino and the Greek masters John Argyropoulos and Andronicus Callistus. At the age of 15 he began the translation of Homer’s *Iliad* and dedicated the second and third books to Lorenzo de’ Medici, the ruler of Florence from 1469 (he later also translated the fourth and fifth books).<sup>2</sup> In 1474 he became Lorenzo’s secretary and his son Piero’s tutor (later also of Giovanni, born in 1475 and the future Pope Leo X).

Poliziano’s early works were mainly poetic: he wrote several poems in Latin, Italian, and Greek. In 1473 he wrote an obituary of Albiera degli Albizi, a young Florentine woman who had suddenly died after an open-air dance given in honour of Eleonora of Aragon in July of that year. Another of his first Latin poetic compositions was the long letter in elegiac verses to Bartolomeo Fonzio.<sup>3</sup> Some years later Poliziano wrote the *Sylva in scabiem*,<sup>4</sup> an experimental poem in Latin hexameters in which he describes in anatomical details the physical degradation caused by scabies.

His greatest work in Italian is the *Stanze*, a poem on the joust won in 1475 by Lorenzo’s brother, Giuliano de’ Medici (and on the latter’s love for Simonetta Vespucci).<sup>5</sup> The poem remained unfinished because Giuliano was murdered by the Pazzi (25 April 1478). A few months later Poliziano wrote a chronicle, in

<sup>1</sup> On Poliziano’s biography, see Maier (1966).

<sup>2</sup> See Rubinstein (1983).

<sup>3</sup> Both works have been published by Bausi (2003).

<sup>4</sup> Published by Orvieto (1989).

<sup>5</sup> See Quint (1993).

Latin prose, of the conspiracy, the *A report on the Pazzi conspiracy (Pactianae coniurationis commentarium)*.<sup>6</sup>

In 1479 Poliziano's relations with Lorenzo were undermined by the enmity of Clarice Orsini, Lorenzo's wife, perhaps because she disapproved of Poliziano's liberal approach in teaching Piero. He therefore abandoned the Medicean court and travelled in Northern Italy, visiting Venice, Padua and then Mantua, where he was welcomed by the Marquis Francesco Gonzaga. In Mantua Poliziano wrote the *Fabula di Orfeo*, the first important theatrical work of Italian literature.<sup>7</sup>

In 1480 there was a reconciliation with Lorenzo, and Poliziano was appointed professor of poetics and rhetoric in the *Studium* of Florence (in the first years he also taught Greek). His courses were highly innovative, in comparison with those of his predecessor Cristoforo Landino: in his first course he commented on post-classical authors such as Quintilian and Statius (whose *Silvae* he read) and adopted a philological approach, abandoning Landino's allegorism. In the following years he read Ovid's *Fasti*, Persius' *Satires*, Virgil's *Georgics*, Suetonius' *Caesars* and other works, as well as Greek authors such as Hesiod and Homer.<sup>8</sup> His prolusions in verses – which he called *Sylvae*, like those of Statius: *Manto* (1482) on Virgil's *Bucolics*; *Rusticus* (1484) on Virgil's *Georgics*; *Ambra* (1486) on Homer; and *Nutricia* (1487) on poetry – were also highly innovative.<sup>9</sup> He then collected a selection of his philological studies in the *Miscellaneorum centuria prima* (*First collection of one hundred various notes*) published in 1489 in Florence.<sup>10</sup> He also worked on a second *Centuria*, but it remained unfinished and was only published in 1972.<sup>11</sup> Some of the commentaries prepared by Poliziano for his courses have also been published in recent decades.

In the late 1480s Poliziano gave more time to his philosophical interests and became a friend of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, a follower of Ficino and a philosopher. His last courses (1490–1492) concerned Aristotle, as did his last prolusions (in Latin prose): *Introduction to logic (Praelectio de dialectica, 1491); Lamia, Introduction to Aristotle's Prior Analytics (Lamia, praelectio in Priora)*

<sup>6</sup> Published by Perosa (1958).

<sup>7</sup> See Fantazzi (2001).

<sup>8</sup> See Mandosio (2008).

<sup>9</sup> The four *Sylvae* have been translated by Fantazzi (2004).

<sup>10</sup> The work was then published in the Basel edition of Poliziano's *Opera omnia* (1553), repr. in Maier (1971: I 213–311). See also the edition of Katayama (1982) and that of the preface to Lorenzo de Medici provided by MacPhail (2015).

<sup>11</sup> Branca-Pastore Stocchi (1972).

*Aristotelis Analytica*, 1492);<sup>12</sup> and *Dialectica* (1493). Lorenzo's death (1492) was followed by a period of instability in Florence, which paved the way for the Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola. Poliziano died in 1494, just before the arrival in Florence of the troops of the King of France Charles VIII. The circumstances of his death (and of that of Pico) are mysterious.<sup>13</sup>

## 2 Poliziano Reading Plutarch

Poliziano used Plutarch's works extensively, including both the *Parallel lives* and the *Moralia*. He was also interested in some fragmentary works: in a letter to Pico<sup>14</sup> he quotes the statement on Hesiod attributed to Plutarch by the ancient scholia (from Plutarch's lost commentary on Hesiod's *Works and Days*).<sup>15</sup> In the commentary on Virgil's *Georgics*, there are two quotations of Plutarch's lost *Problems on Aratus' signs* (*Quaestiones de Arati signis*), from the *Scholia vetera in Aratum*.<sup>16</sup>

Poliziano's appreciation of Plutarch is well expressed in the *Lamia*, where he states that he does not know if this author was "more learned or more serious" (*nescio doctior an gravior*).<sup>17</sup> In the first *Centuria* Plutarch is explicitly presented to the students as a master: "we entrust the studious youth to the author Plutarch" (*studiosam iuventutem ad auctorem Plutarchum delegamus*).<sup>18</sup> Poliziano only attributed one failing to Plutarch, namely, that the author "who compared the lives of famous Greek and Latin men" did not want to learn Latin: "he may well seem not so much to have died when he came to the end of his days as to have withdrawn for the purpose of studying the Roman language".<sup>19</sup>

The *Parallel lives* were well known from the beginning of the fifteenth century and most of them had been translated into Latin by several humanists (see Becchi in this volume).<sup>20</sup> Poliziano frequently quotes from the *Lives* in his commentaries and eulogises them in his *Preface to Suetonius* (*Praefatio in Suetonium*), probably written at the end of the 1480s, where he declares that he

<sup>12</sup> Celenza (2010).

<sup>13</sup> On the sudden and suspicious deaths of both Poliziano and Pico, see Orvieto (2009: 142–54).

<sup>14</sup> Maier (1971: I 169).

<sup>15</sup> Bausi (1996: 89).

<sup>16</sup> Bevegni (2009a: 217 n.).

<sup>17</sup> Celenza (2010: 194–195).

<sup>18</sup> Maier (1971: I 240).

<sup>19</sup> Butler (2006: 151) (in a letter to Ludovico Odasi). Poliziano refers to *Dem. 2*, where Plutarch refers to his limited knowledge of the Latin language.

<sup>20</sup> See Pade (2007).

prefers the biographical genre to historiography, exemplifying the two genres with the writers Plutarch and Suetonius (biography) and Herodotus and Sallust (historiography).<sup>21</sup>

Despite this appreciation, Poliziano does not seem to have devoted much time to the study of the *Lives*. We only occasionally find some philological references to them, as in a letter to Timoteo Balbano written in 1489, where Poliziano, at his interlocutor's request, gives his exegesis and translation of a passage of the preface to the *Life of Phocion*.<sup>22</sup> Poliziano paid much more attention to the *Moralia*, which had enjoyed much less fortune in the first half of the century. Some treatises had been well known for a long time, such as the *On the education of children*, translated by Guarino Veronese around 1411–3, while only a limited number of the *Moralia* had been translated<sup>23</sup> and few scholars, before Poliziano, revealed a deep knowledge of the whole collection.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, few manuscripts contained all the treatises and the *editio princeps* of the *Moralia* would only be printed in 1509 by Aldus Manutius.

The humanists' interest in the *Moralia* substantially increased in Poliziano's time: Federico of Montefeltro, as stated by the bookseller Vespasiano of Bisticci, claimed that his library in Urbino had all the *Moralia*.<sup>25</sup> A translation of all the *Moralia* was planned in the same years by Giovanbattista Buonisegni,<sup>26</sup> another humanist linked with the Medici and a friend of Ficino and of Poliziano himself (who dedicated some of his Greek epigrams to him).<sup>27</sup> Another translator of some of the *Moralia* was Ludovico Odasi of Urbino, who in 1585 sent Poliziano one of his translations,<sup>28</sup> supposedly that of the *On envy and hatred*.<sup>29</sup> Poliziano read the *Moralia* in the 1470s, thanks to the various manuscripts in Lorenzo's Library. The registers of the Medicean Library reveal that Poliziano was still borrowing Plutarch's manuscripts at the beginning of the 1490s.<sup>30</sup> From these manuscripts Poliziano copied several excerpts in the ms. of Florence BNC II 1 99.<sup>31</sup> These excerpts are mostly in Greek, only sometimes

<sup>21</sup> Fera (2004: 155).

<sup>22</sup> Battistini (1931).

<sup>23</sup> Stok (1998).

<sup>24</sup> Among these few scholars, mention should be made of Guarino Veronese, who knew the *Moralia* from the Planudes' manuscript now in Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, C 126 inf.: see Stok (2013).

<sup>25</sup> Greco (1976: 395–396).

<sup>26</sup> Becchi (2009: 29–30).

<sup>27</sup> Pontani (2002: 17–18).

<sup>28</sup> Maïer (1971: I 30–1); Butler (2006: 149–151).

<sup>29</sup> Butler (2006: 339).

<sup>30</sup> Malta (2004: 181 n.).

<sup>31</sup> Cesarini Martinelli (1982); Bevegni (2009–10).

translated or paraphrased in Latin. They are drawn from 32 treatises of the 78 included in the *Moralia*.

The most interesting part of this collection is in the first fascicle of the manuscripts (f. 1–50), copied around 1479.<sup>32</sup> It contains excerpts of several authors on poetry and poets (Lucia Cesarini Martinelli, who discovered the collection, called it *De poesia et poetis*).<sup>33</sup> Poliziano was perhaps planning a work on poetry, but he only composed it several years later, with the *Nutricia*. But it is possible that Poliziano, in collecting these excerpts, wanted to prepare for the teaching position in the *Studium*, which he hoped, as early as 1479, to have from Lorenzo. The collection of poetry includes several authors,<sup>34</sup> but the selection from Plutarch is the largest (ff. 8r–26r); it contains 22 treatises of the *Moralia*. The source used by Poliziano was the ms. of Florence Laur. 80,21, where the treatises are copied in the same order followed by Poliziano, and in which we find his own hand-written annotations.<sup>35</sup>

A first group of excerpts deals with the philosophical debate on poetry. Several excerpts from the *It is not possible even to live pleasantly according to Epicurus* are about the Epicurean position on poetry. Other excerpts on this topic are *On the glory of Athens* 348A–B (on Plato's criticism of poetry) and *Stoic paradoxes are stranger than poets'* 1058C (the rationality of poetry and the unreasonableness of the Stoics). Other excerpts concern various aspects of poetry and poetical works: how poets deal with death (*Consolation to Apollonius* 104A–106C, 109A, 115B), exile (*On exile* 602D, 604F, 605C), old age (*Whether old men should engage in public affairs* 785A, 786B, 791E, 795D), poetry and painting (*On the glory of Athens* 346F). As well as poetry, Poliziano also collected mythological topics of poetical interest: regarding the Muses and Graces (*On the fact that the philosopher ought most of all to converse with leaders* 777D, 778C); the myth of the Titans (*On the eating of meat* 996C); the Fates (*On fate* 568D–E). Several excerpts concern the theology of the ancient Egyptians (drawn from the *On Isis and Osiris*).

Most of the collection deals with Greek poetry and several Greek poets: comedy and tragedy in Athens (*On the glory of Athens* 348F, 349A); Lycurgus and the tragedies of Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides (*Lives of the ten orators* 841F); Eratosthenes, Parthenius, Euripides and other poets (*Minor parallels* 306C, 307C, 310F, 312A and 314C); Homer and Hesiod at the burial of

<sup>32</sup> Cesarini Martinelli (1985b: 474).

<sup>33</sup> Cesarini Martinelli (1985b: 464).

<sup>34</sup> The authors, whose works have been copied include, apart from Plutarch, Jerome, Boccaccio, Diogenes Laertius, Pausanias, Strabo, and others.

<sup>35</sup> Cesarini Martinelli (1982: 187).

Amphidamas (*Symposium of the seven sages* 153E); Pindar and Corinna (*On the glory of Athens* 347E–348D); Sappho (*Virtues of women* 243A–B); Amphion and other mythical poets (*On music* 1131F–1132B); Homer (*Doctrines of the philosophers* 875E); Hesiod (*Symposium of the seven sages* 162C–F), and others. Poliziano also copied Greeks verses quoted by Plutarch: by Callimachus (*Doctrines of the philosophers* 881A), Euripides (*On the 'E' at Delphi* 384D), Homer (*On the 'E' at Delphi* 387B; *On music* 1131E), Hesiod (*On Stoic contradictions* 1045A) and others. Furthermore, the copied works also include the full text of the *Comparatio* between Aristophanes and Menander, and two-thirds of the text of the *On Homer*.

Poliziano frequently used *On Homer* (a work attributed to Plutarch, but in fact spurious): in the commentaries (for example in the notes on Quintilian's *Institutes of oratory*),<sup>36</sup> and especially in the prologue to the course on Homer (1885) that is largely based on this work.<sup>37</sup> In the manuscript, the *On Homer* is excerpted in Greek, as is the case with the other *Moralia*, although Poliziano surely knew the Latin translation made some years earlier by Pellegrino Agli, who dedicated it to Lorenzo de' Medici.<sup>38</sup> Instead, he sometimes used the Latin translation of another treatise, that of the *Roman questions* and the *Greek questions* by Gian Pietro da Lucca, published in Venice 1477 with the title *Problēmata*.<sup>39</sup> Poliziano used it in his commentaries, for example on Vergil's *Georgics* 4.7 (282B)<sup>40</sup> and on Ovid's *Fasti* 1.543 (290E), but in this last case he criticises the translation.<sup>41</sup>

In the collection on poetry we do not find the treatise *On reading the poets*, because it is not in the ms. Laur. 80,21. Poliziano however knew it from the ms. Laur. 56,4, which he excerpted in another fascicle of the BNF 11199, copied about 1470. Apart from *On reading the poets*, the excerpts in this fascicle (ff. 53r–57r) were drawn from *On the intelligence of animals*, *On the education of children*, *On virtue and vice*, and *How to profit from your enemies*. Other excerpts from Plutarch are copied in the two following fascicles of the same manuscript. The first was copied in the middle of the 1480s and includes (ff. 103v–104r) excerpts from *On talkativeness* and *On tranquillity of mind*,<sup>42</sup> the second was copied some years later and includes (ff. 124r–130v and 133r–135v)

<sup>36</sup> Daneloni (2001: 168–169).

<sup>37</sup> Megna (2007: XXXIII–XLVI).

<sup>38</sup> Megna (2007: LXXX–LXXXV).

<sup>39</sup> Branca (1983: 89 n.).

<sup>40</sup> Castano Musicò (1990: 196).

<sup>41</sup> Lo Monaco (1991: 145).

<sup>42</sup> Bevegni (2010: 196–198).

excerpts from *Table talk* 1–4. The source of these sections is the ms. Laur. 80,5.<sup>43</sup> Poliziano's other excerpts from the *Moralia* are contained in the ms. Paris BNF graec. 3069:<sup>44</sup> from *On the obsolescence of oracles*, *On the fortune of the Romans*, *Which is more useful, fire or water?* and *On exile* (ff. 174r–178v).<sup>45</sup>

These last collections are not thematic, unlike the case with the above-mentioned one on poetry. In these cases, Poliziano chose to include curiosities, quotations of verses, and miscellaneous information that he probably considered useful for his philological work. *Table talk* 1–4, for example, is used in the notes to the *Odyssey*, written in the same years.<sup>46</sup> At that time, Poliziano did not know Books 5–9 of this work, which was not among the manuscripts of the Medicean Library. He was only able to read these books some years later, as can be seen in the second *Centuria* (where Book 8 is used) and the notes to Suetonius, where he writes that this treatise is very difficult to find (*inventu rarissimus*).<sup>47</sup>

### 3 Plutarch in Poliziano's Works

Quotations and echoes of Plutarch's works are present in the whole of Poliziano's poetical and philological production. We find the name of Plutarch in the letter to Lorenzo entitled *That anger in boys is often an indication of good character* (*Quod ira in pueris optimae saepe indolis est argumentum*).<sup>48</sup> The letter was written in the period in which Poliziano was Piero's teacher and takes its cue from a fit of anger on the child's part, which Poliziano considered a proof of character and not something negative (a tolerance linked with Poliziano's pedagogy that perhaps contributed to Clarice's hostility towards him). Poliziano attributes the sentence "they who do not know anger are mindless" (*iram non habere qui mentem non habent*) to Plutarch, although it is not identifiable in Plutarch's works.<sup>49</sup> But we can recognise in the letter the use of *On moral virtue*, in the statement that passion strengthens the soul of the fighter: "he is excited by the trumpets, by the horns, by the bugles and by the speeches of the commanders" (*hunc tubae, hunc cornua, hunc classica,*

<sup>43</sup> Bevegni (2013: 878–879).

<sup>44</sup> On this manuscript, see Daneloni (2011).

<sup>45</sup> Maier (1965: 229); Silvano (2010: 174–217).

<sup>46</sup> Silvano (2010: 72).

<sup>47</sup> Fera (1983: 191).

<sup>48</sup> Maier (1971: 1 474–477).

<sup>49</sup> De Capua (2004: 229).

*hunc imperatoriae excitant conciones).<sup>50</sup>* Plutarch, in *On moral virtue* 452B, similarly writes that it is necessary to rouse and increase the fighting qualities “with trumpets and pipes” (*salpinxi kai aulois*). Both Poliziano and Plutarch quote Homer’s verses to validate their statements.

It is surprising that Poliziano, in a letter that is a brief treatise on anger, does not mention Plutarch’s most well-known treatise on anger, that is *On the control of anger*. It is possible that he did not know of this treatise or that he did not have access to it when he wrote the letter, but it is more probable that he did not believe it would endorse the aim of the letter, which was to support a tolerant approach regarding anger. However, from the poem *Sylva in scabiem*, probably written soon after the letter on anger,<sup>51</sup> it would seem that he was acquainted with *On the control of anger*. The enigmatic scabies described in this poem presents features typical of the *furor* (“madness”), regarded by the ancient Stoics as the ultimate form of anger. This *furor* perhaps alludes to Clarice, Lorenzo’s wife who in these years was stubbornly opposed to Poliziano.<sup>52</sup> Plutarch’s arguments on anger were in this case suitable for the perspective adopted in the poem.

Plutarch is manifestly used by Poliziano in the prefatory letter of the Latin translation of Epictetus’ *Enchiridion*, dated 22 May 1479. The beginning of the letter also syntactically echoes that of the *Stoic paradoxes are stranger than poets*’, where Plutarch quotes Pindar about the myth of Caeneus (1057C–D). Poliziano adapts his source by presenting Caeneus as a positive figure, compared to Epictetus, while in Plutarch’s treatise Caeneus represents the wise Stoic as negative figure. This shows the characteristics of Poliziano’s imitation and use of Plutarch: he is interested in the cultural and literary topics dealt with by Plutarch and his language, not his philosophical treatises (and in fact the *Moralia* less quoted by Poliziano are precisely the philosophical ones, such as the *Against Colotes*, *On the creation of the soul in the Timaeus* and *Platonic questions*).

The linguistic approach to Plutarch is evident in some of Poliziano’s Greek and Latin poems. In the Greek epigram he not only used myths recounted in the *Moralia*, but also words which he reproduces in his verses.<sup>53</sup> His Latin poetical works also reveal verbal echoes of Plutarch: in *Nutricia* l. 550 the epithet *aeger* (“ill”) referring to Philitas translates the term *nosōdēs* of *Whether old men should engage in public affairs* 791E. Plutarch’s passage is quoted in

<sup>50</sup> De Capua (2004: 240).

<sup>51</sup> See the dating proposed by Orvieto (1989: 50–51).

<sup>52</sup> So Orvieto (1989: 54).

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, Pontani (2002: 186–188 and 230–231).

the commentary on Statius, *Silvae* 1.2.252,<sup>54</sup> as an explanation for the identity of Philitas. In the other *Sylvae* the use of Plutarch is even more pronounced. The portrait of Cicero in *Manto* ll. 21–25 echoes that of *Cic.* 4.7.<sup>55</sup> The eulogy of Homer in *Ambra* ll. 457–589 is based on that of the *On Homer*.<sup>56</sup> This last work, as we have seen, was very frequently used by Poliziano, who probably appreciated both its moderate recourse to allegorism, and the position adopted by the pseudo-Plutarch with regard to Plato's condemnation of poetry.<sup>57</sup>

Echoes of Plutarch are also present in Poliziano's later works. The *Lamia* (1492) begins with a quotation of *On curiosity* 515F–516A on the Lamiae, female monsters with removable eyes (*oculi exemptiles*), blind at home and using false eyes outside. The Lamiae represent, in Poliziano's allegory, the old professors of the Florentine *Studium*, Landino, Chalcocondyles and Ficino,<sup>58</sup> and the description drawn from Plutarch "signifies that all inner knowledge is precluded to the new lamias of the Studio, who pass their time investigating only things external to themselves."<sup>59</sup>

#### 4 Plutarch and Poliziano's Philology

Plutarch was very frequently quoted in the courses held by Poliziano in the Florentine *Studium* from 1480. His use of Plutarch is part of what Grafton called the "new standard for the use of sources", that is, systematically and accurately mentioning all the texts and documents useful for the explanation and the exegesis of a text: a philological approach that was "a clear break with the methods of the last generation."<sup>60</sup>

The commentaries dating back to the first courses reveal the use of the excerpts collected in the ms. BNC 11 199. We find several of those excerpts in the commentaries on Ovid's letter of Sappho to Phaon (*Her.* 15)<sup>61</sup> and on the *Silvae* of Statius<sup>62</sup> (the collection is also explicitly mentioned in the commentary on Persius' *Satires*).<sup>63</sup> But these commentaries also contain, apart from the old

54 Cesarini Martinelli (1978: 264).

55 Bettinzoli (1998: 212–213).

56 Bausi (1996: 445).

57 Megna (2007: LXV).

58 Wesseling (1986: XVII–XIX).

59 Candido (2010: 108).

60 Grafton (1977: 160).

61 Edited by Lazzeri (1971).

62 Poliziano sometimes translates or paraphrases the excerpts; see Bevegni (2009a: 212–216).

63 Cesarini Martinelli (1985a: 26).

excepts, many other quotations from Plutarch, and that suggests that Poliziano in the 1480s was regularly consulting the *Moralia* and to a certain extent also the *Parallel lives*.

Poliziano directly used, in his courses, those of Plutarch's treatises which dealt more with the authors he was commenting on. In the course on Virgil's *Georgics*, for example, he regularly used the *Natural questions*, a work concerning natural scientific – including botanical – topics, and quoted from it frequently: e.g. in the note to 1.73 pertaining to the term *farrā* ("wheat") he quotes *Quaest. nat.* 915E on the maturation of wheat.<sup>64</sup> But other *Moralia* are also usually quoted in every commentary: in the note to *Georgics* 4.194, where the bees use little stones (*lapilli*) to protect themselves from the water, Poliziano quotes *On the intelligence of animals* 967B on the Cretan bees, that "ballast themselves with little stones (*mikrois lithidiois*)".<sup>65</sup> The *On Homer* is largely used in the commentary on the *Silvae* of Statius, together with ample quotations from *Doctrines of the philosophers* (885D in the note to 1.2),<sup>66</sup> *On the glory of Athens* (347B–348A in the note to 4.7),<sup>67</sup> and others. The use of Plutarch is generally linked with mythology and the lexicon, but sometimes also with philosophical interpretations: the ample quotations from the *Doctrines of the philosophers* 884E–885F and the *On fate* 568C–E in the note to Statius' *Silvae* 1.2.40<sup>68</sup> enable Poliziano to avoid an excessive Stoic determinism.<sup>69</sup>

Quotations from the *Moralia* are usually more frequent than those from the *Parallel lives*. In the notes to the *Odyssey* there are several quotations from the *Moralia* and only one from the *Lives*, from the *Life of Solon*.<sup>70</sup> The commentary on the *Fasti* is very ample, providing an abundant collection of sources regarding mythology and religion: the quotations from the *Moralia* are about 90, those from the *Lives* about 40.<sup>71</sup> But in the notes to Suetonius the use of the *Lives* is obviously more frequent,<sup>72</sup> considering the biographic genre of both works.

The role of Plutarch in Poliziano's philology is very apparent in the *Miscellanea*. Plutarch is frequently mentioned in the first *Centuria*, and

<sup>64</sup> Castano Musicò (1990: 22).

<sup>65</sup> Castano Musicò (1990: 206).

<sup>66</sup> Cesarin Martinelli (1978: 275–277).

<sup>67</sup> Cesarin Martinelli (1978: 680).

<sup>68</sup> Cesarin Martinelli (1978: 213–215).

<sup>69</sup> Bettinzoli (2009: 184).

<sup>70</sup> Silvano (2010: 33).

<sup>71</sup> Lo Monaco (1991: 508–509).

<sup>72</sup> See Gardenal (1975: 81–87); Fera (1983).

proportionally also more often in the second.<sup>73</sup> In most cases the use of Plutarch's works is exegetical. *Misc.* 1.99 regards Suetonius, *Nero* 25.1, where the winners of the games in Naples are said to have destroyed a piece of the town wall, "as is customary with victors in the sacred games" (*ut mos hieronicarum est*). Poliziano explains the meaning of *hieronicus* thanks to *Table talk* 639E<sup>74</sup> (in the notes to Suetonius he mentions Plutarch again as well as his own *Miscellanea*).<sup>75</sup> Poliziano's interest in the passage is both exegetical and lexicographical:<sup>76</sup> Plutarch's word *hieronikai* is quoted in the note to *Odyssey* 1.2, as a lexical parallel of the Homeric *hieron*.<sup>77</sup>

*Misc.* 1.7 concerns Juvenal 9.133: *qui digito scalpunt uno caput* ("who scratch the head with one finger"), a gesture which is interpreted by Poliziano as a sign of passive homosexuality. In the *recollectae* of the ms. of Florence Ricc. 153 (from the course held in 1485–1486) the interpretation is based on the fragment of Levius quoted by Seneca in *Controversiae* 7.4.7,<sup>78</sup> but in *Misc.* Poliziano mentions first of all, in support of his interpretation, Plutarch's *Life of Pompey* 48.7 and *How to profit from your enemies* 89E.<sup>79</sup>

Another exegesis based on Plutarch is that of Ovid's *Ars poetica* 3.327, "Learn, too, to sweep the strings of the joyous psaltery with either hand" (*Disce etiam duplice genialia nablia palma*) (*Misc.* 1.14).<sup>80</sup> Ovid's manuscripts known to Poliziano read *naulia* instead of *nablia* ("psaltery"); he considered it a diminutive and confirmed this interpretation through the verse of Sophocles (fr. 849 Radt) quoted by Plutarch in *On the 'E' at Delphi* 394B, where the musical instrument is called *naula* (but editors modify *enaula*). Poliziano also quotes *Table talk* 638C, where he read *to naulon* (instead of *ton aulon*, "flute"),<sup>81</sup> and his own *Nutricia* l. 172, where he had written *naula* imitating Ovid.

In some cases Plutarch enables Poliziano to identify people mentioned by the Latin authors: in *Misc.* 1.16 he identifies, through the *Life of Crassus* 32.4, the Aristides mentioned by Ovid in *Tristia* 2.443.<sup>82</sup> In other cases Poliziano uses Plutarch's texts to support textual emendations. In one of the chapters dedicated to Pliny the Elder's *Natural history*, *Misc.* 1.61,<sup>83</sup> he criticises the reading

73 As Branca observed (1983: 171).

74 Maïer (1971: I 308).

75 Fera (1983: 191).

76 See Bevegni (2013: 881).

77 Silvano (2010: 23).

78 Daneloni (2006: 588–590).

79 Maïer (1971: I 231).

80 Maïer (1971: I 238).

81 Lupi (2013: 119 n.).

82 Maïer (1971: I 240).

83 Maïer (1971: I 278).

of *Natural history* 14.58 given by the 1473 edition, “hemlock is poison to a man, as is wine” (*venenum est homini cicuta, ita et vinum*), and prefers the reading of a *vetustissimus codex* (that is the ms. Laur. 82.1): “hemlock is poison to a man, and wine to hemlock” (*cicuta homini venenum est, cicutae vinum*), supporting this reading through *Table talk* 653A, where he read that a large quantity of wine is an antidote to hemlock.<sup>84</sup> Another case is the one regarding Juvenal’s *Satire* 3.67, about a man who *sumit trechedipna* (“wears a kind of slipper”). The manuscripts known to Poliziano read *rechedipna*: he corrected *trechedipna* (“slippers”) basing himself on *Table talk* 726A–B and to the fragment of Alcaeus provided by Plutarch himself. This is one of several instances in which Poliziano is interested in the fragments provided by Plutarch: we have already seen the case of Sophocles in *Misc.* 1.14. In another case, *Misc.* 2.47,<sup>85</sup> Poliziano attributes to Euripides a fragment provided by Plutarch in the *Consolation to Apollonius* 36F.<sup>86</sup>

An emendation proposed in the second *Centuria* (*Misc.* 2.30)<sup>87</sup> concerns Ovid *Ars amatoria* 2.257–258: “Make a present, too, to the handmaid, on the day on which the Gallic army, deceived by the garments of the matrons, received retribution” (*porridge et ancillae, qua poenas luce pependit/lusa maritali Gallica veste manu*), where the manuscripts known to Poliziano read *quae* instead of *qua*. He emends *qua*, the reading adopted by the editors, through the reconstruction of Ovid’s context, that is, the festival of the *Nonae Capritinae*, provided by Plutarch’s *Life of Romulus* 29, *Camillus* 33, *Numa* 2 and other sources.<sup>88</sup>

## 5 The Latin Translation of the *Love Stories*

Poliziano translated Greek works from his youth (translation of the *Iliad*) to his last years (in 1492 he translated the letter by Athanasius to Marcellinus).<sup>89</sup> He particularly devoted himself to this activity in the spring and summer of 1479, when he was staying in the Medicean Villa of Fiesole, where Lorenzo had taken refuge from the Black Death which had struck Florence in that year. In fact, in those months, Poliziano translated the *Enchiridion* by Epictetus,<sup>90</sup> the *Problēmata* by Alexander of Aphrodisias, and the *Love stories* by Plutarch (or

<sup>84</sup> See Viti (2012: 165).

<sup>85</sup> Branca-Pastore Stocchi (1978: 85).

<sup>86</sup> See Vassallo (2010–2011).

<sup>87</sup> Branca-Pastore Stocchi (1978: 45–46).

<sup>88</sup> See Ribuoli (1982).

<sup>89</sup> Accame (2012).

<sup>90</sup> Oliver (1958).

pseudo-Plutarch: most scholars consider this work spurious on account of its language and style,<sup>91</sup> but its authenticity is supported by Giangrande).<sup>92</sup>

The translation is dedicated to Pandolfo Colenuccio (1444–1504), a humanist from Pesaro. From the dedicatory letter, dated 5 August, we learn that Pandolfo had been deeply affected by the love story told by Alexander, *Problēmata* 1.8, translated by Poliziano a few months earlier. The translation of Plutarch is presented by Poliziano as *amoris nostri monumentum ac pignus*<sup>93</sup> (“reminder and pledge of our love”), to satisfy the curiosity of his friend. The *Love stories* in fact includes five love stories (with tragic endings). Poliziano’s explanation does not seem plausible,<sup>94</sup> but it is true that he did not have a high regard for his work: in 1483 Pico asked him for all his translations, but he only sent him that of Epictetus, stating that the others did not deserve to see the light.<sup>95</sup>

The translation is based on the Greek text of the ms. Laur. graec. 80.21,<sup>96</sup> which Poliziano had already used in previous years and which contains his handwritten notes. Sometimes Poliziano remedies textual corruptions. In one case (772F) his translation presupposes an emendation later introduced by Xylander.<sup>97</sup> In his translation Poliziano emphasises the description of love given by Plutarch (or pseudo-Plutarch), introducing the metaphor of love as fire and madness developed by Alexander of Aphrodisias in his *Problēmata* (and also by Marsilio Ficino). More generally he amplifies and dramatises the prose of Plutarch, adding adverbs and adjectives, revealing a literary and creative approach that is observable also in other translations.<sup>98</sup> The translation was printed in the edition of Aldus (1498) and then in that of Basel (1520), and reprinted in several editions of Plutarch.

Poliziano was the last great figure of Italian Humanism and a forerunner of modern philology, able to work on both Latin and Greek texts. Plutarch, as a Greek author interested and involved in the Roman world, was especially important for Poliziano’s approach to classical antiquity. The reasons for Poliziano’s interest in Plutarch perhaps also included his empathy with a scholar who had an intimate knowledge of both ancient cultures, which was what Poliziano also wanted.

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91 Cf. for example Volkmann (1869: 1126–129); Cuvigny (1980: 112).

92 Giangrande (1991: 276–279).

93 The letter and translation have been published by Malta (2004).

94 Maier (1966: 382).

95 Malta (2004: 164 n.).

96 Malta (2004: 183–185); Bevegni (2009b: 60–64).

97 Bevegni (2009b: 68).

98 See Viti (2011: 43–44).

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## Plutarch's French Translation by Amyot

*†Françoise Frazier and Olivier Guerrier*

The key position of Amyot's translation – which is probably the most accomplished version in vernacular – within the modern reception of Plutarch's works is certainly due to the conjunction of three different factors: the historical context, the nature of the translated work and the talent of the translator. The Renaissance was indeed the period not only when ancient Greece was rediscovered, a century later in France than in Italy, but also when the classical legacy partook of the creation of a literary vernacular through the *translatio studii* and a wealth of translations. In this context, Plutarch's works provided his humanist readers both with a true and proper work of reference that exposed the history, conceptions and customs of antiquity and with a vast area where they could shape their own itineraries, in keeping with the selective reading method then performed. Moreover, François Rabelais (1494–1553), who could read the Greek original text, during the first half of the century, and Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592), using Amyot's translation, during the second half, remarkably bore witness to his literary fecundity (see Edelman in this volume). As for Amyot (1513–1593), he can also be considered one of the great prose writers of his time, as were Rabelais and Montaigne:<sup>1</sup> more precisely, the “sçavant translateur” (“scholarly translator”), as Du Bellay entitled him, displayed three original features: he worked directly on the Greek text as a philologist, whereas the incomplete French translations generally came from an earlier Latin version; he translated *all* of Plutarch's works, both the *Lives* (1559) and the *Moralia*<sup>2</sup> (1572) and he played a part in establishing the literary credentials of the French language. In order to assess the importance of his translation, we must pay close attention to the translator's work, and place it within a historical perspective on the reception of Plutarch's works as well, since there was a clear-cut difference between a “before” and an “after” Amyot.

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<sup>1</sup> On the importance of Plutarch for “three of the greatest prose writers of the sixteenth century”, see Menini (2018).

<sup>2</sup> The abbot Ricard was the only one in France who retranslated the whole works, first the *Moralia* (1783–1795), then the *Lives* (1798–1803).

## 1 Plutarch in France before Amyot's Translation

The political and cultural accomplishments of Francis I, who ascended the throne in 1515, paved the way for Amyot's work during the first half of the sixteenth century: these accomplishments will be taken into consideration, before surveying Plutarch's reception itself.

Translating in the sixteenth century was a political act, aiming at enriching French culture and asserting the superiority of the French language over other vernaculars. Thus, Francis I, the founder of the "Collège des trois langues" (that is to say Latin, Greek and Hebrew), or "Collegium Trilingue", in 1530, which later became the "Collège de France", and creator of the "Bibliothèque de Fontainebleau", which came as a precursor of the "Bibliothèque Nationale de France", attached translators to his court. Most of the time they were "established" owing to the offices they held or the fact that they received pensions from him.<sup>3</sup> His aim was to enlighten the "ignorant nobility of his kingdom", and this impulse enabled the translation in French of both Latin and Greek (or even Italian and Spanish) works to expand considerably in the 1540s, along with the establishment of French as the official language used in legal and governmental documents following the Ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts (1539). Thus, from 1535 onwards, the King assigned Georges de Selve (1508–1541) with the translation of eight of the *Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans* (*Them.-Cam., Per.-Fab., Alc.-Cor., Tim.-Aem*): his handwritten translation was printed posthumously by Michel de Vascosan in 1547.<sup>4</sup>

In the same decade when Joachim du Bellay (1522–1560) published his reflection on language and poetic creation (*Deffence, et Illustration de la langue françoise*, 1549), Etienne Dolet (1509–1546) wrote an important treatise, which paved the way for a theoretical approach to translation (*Manière de bien traduire d'une langue en aultre*, 1540):<sup>5</sup> he condemned *ad verbum* ("word for word") translations and insisted on the necessity of respecting the text *ad sensum* (according to its meaning). The notion of "intention", which underpinned a form of equilibrium between spirit and letter, was then asserted. It also postulated that an intellectual affinity between author and translator was necessary:

3 For more on Francis I, see <http://expositions.bnf.fr/francoisler/arret/05.htm> ("the King and the Arts"); <http://expositions.bnf.fr/francoisler/arret/09.htm> ("the King and the Humanities"); <http://expositions.bnf.fr/francoisler/arret/06.htm> ("the King's library") (last accessed 4 March 2019).

4 The in-folio volume can be seen at the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal (FOL-H-5030); there was a second publication by J. de Tournes in 1548 (Lyon) in two handy *sextodecimo* volumes (BNF: RES-J-2080).

5 <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k50568o.r> (last accessed 4 March 2019).

both Montaigne and F. Morel, who wrote two *Lives of Amyot*, the first one in Latin (1612) and the second one in French (1619),<sup>6</sup> allegedly identified such an affinity between Amyot and Plutarch.<sup>7</sup> The status of translators as well as that of translations remained undoubtedly ambiguous. The *Art poétique* written by Jacques Peletier du Mans (1517–1582), which was published in 1555, testified to it: on the one hand, it stated that a translator cannot be called an author, and that he depends on the author whose works he translates; but on the other hand, a “good translation” is proclaimed to be superior to “a poor invention”, and Peletier asserted that translation should legitimately be included “in our *Art*, since its elaboration requires artistic skills”.

Plutarch's reception greatly benefited from the publication of the full Greek text of his works; first the *Moralia* – a collection of all of his various treatises and opuscula gathered into a unified corpus printed in Venice by Aldus Manutius (1509) –, then the *Lives* – printed by Giunta in Florence (1517), and then by Aldus Manutius (1519). The second edition of the *Moralia opuscula*, “purged of many thousands of mistakes” (*multis mendarum milibus expurgata*), which was printed by Froben and Episcopius in Basel, in 1542, stemmed from the work of several scholars who had annotated their *editio princeps*: Amyot had this edition in his possession – the copy he worked on is kept at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (RES-J-103)<sup>8</sup> – and so had Arnoul Le Ferron (1515–1563), who wrote a Latin translation of the *De syllaba Ei apud Delphos* (*On the 'E' at Delphi*) in 1557, and Étienne de la Boétie (1530–1563), whose translation into French of Plutarch's *Advice on marriage* as well as of the *Consolation to my wife* was published by Montaigne in 1571.<sup>9</sup> Rabelais used this edition as well – his personal copy is similarly kept at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (RES G-R-33): the mention of so influential an author as Rabelais underscores that Plutarch's reception did not exclusively rely on translations, whatever their importance may have been.

Two prominent figures allow us to analyse how this reception developed in the decades that predated Amyot's translation: Rabelais, who read the 1542 edition, and, within the previous generation, Guillaume Budé (1467–1540), whose correspondence with Janus Lascaris indicates that he obtained the 1509 edition in fascicle form.<sup>10</sup> Budé translated some of the fourteen treatises collected and published in Paris by Josse Bade (1514), at a time when numerous Latin

<sup>6</sup> Plazenet (2008: 575–602).

<sup>7</sup> Guerrier-Frazier (2013: 189).

<sup>8</sup> <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k10734702> (last accessed 4 March 2019).

<sup>9</sup> <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btvib8609575s> (last accessed 4 March 2019); for other translations, see Aulotte (1971).

<sup>10</sup> Details in Sanchi (2008: 96–97).

translations were being published.<sup>11</sup> He had somehow anticipated this wave of publications since he wrote a Latin version of the *Doctrines of the philosophers* in 1505 and in 1506, and offered Julius II a translation of *On tranquillity of mind*, published along with *On the fortune of the Romans* and the two *On the fortune and virtue of Alexander the Great*.<sup>12</sup> In 1519, he offered Francis I a selection of the *Sayings of kings and commanders*, known as the *Institution du Prince*; a Budé scholar described it as “a French Plutarch before Amyot”<sup>13</sup> on account of the aforementioned rewriting, which included a biblical commentary, mainly on the *Proverbs*, and a florilegium of “dicts et faictz” (“sayings and deeds”), most of which were borrowings from the *Sayings of kings and commanders* and the *Lives*. His work undeniably played a part in a broader “humanistic enterprise”, which gave rise to numerous Latin and vernacular translations of the *Sayings of kings and commanders* in the wake of Erasmus’ authoritative version, published in 1531, and which also begot “new Plutarchs” – who carried on with his work and reinterpreted it – such as “new apophegms”.<sup>14</sup>

During the early years of the century Budé’s task of translating the *Doctrines of the philosophers* presented some difficulties. Though the edition was then complete, there were still many recondite opuscula at the time when Rabelais read and annotated his copy from Basel.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, a third of the corpus had not yet been translated into Latin – which was not the case anymore in the 1570s – since the complete Latin translation of Xylander (1532–1576) was published in Basel in 1570, and then reused by Henri Estienne in his 1572 Greek-Latin bilingual edition. As a matter of fact, Rabelais mainly annotated the treatises that had not yet been translated into Latin. He favoured uncommon words throughout his reading – which was not exhaustive – such as the adverb of place *mēdamothi* (“nowhere”), which can be found almost exclusively in the *On Isis and Osiris* (360B) and became the island of Médamothi in *The Fourth Book*, or curious and cryptic, ambiguous passages; thanks to all these he could play the game of rewriting and feed his poetic creativity, both stylistically and linguistically. His purpose was, in Menini’s words, to “build up mystery through fragmentary references or fleeting allusions to a textual continent that remained mysterious”:<sup>16</sup> this “cryptic intertextuality” called for readers learned enough to appreciate recondite references, whereas Amyot, as a translator,

<sup>11</sup> Aulotte (1965: 28).

<sup>12</sup> On the manuscript that was used and the issues raised by the text, see Sanchi (2008: 93–95).

<sup>13</sup> M.-M. de la Garanderie quoted by Basset-Bénévent (2014: 65).

<sup>14</sup> More on this “humanistic enterprise”, see Cazes (2008).

<sup>15</sup> For an exhaustive inventory of the annotations, see Menini (2014: 620–685).

<sup>16</sup> Menini (2018: 98).

aimed at a larger public to whom he could convey the whole of Plutarch's work – only a third of the *Moralia*<sup>17</sup> had then been translated into French – as clearly as possible, which implied working on elucidating the Greek text and illustrating the French language.<sup>18</sup>

## 2 Plutarch's Translation by Amyot

Born in Melun in a modest family, Jacques Amyot studied in Paris and was quite brilliant, notably at Greek; he then took a course in civil law at the prestigious University of Bourges. There he became the preceptor of the nephews of Jacques Colin, who was the abbot of Saint-Ambroise, and then of Guillaume Bochetel's sons, two eminent figures who held important roles at the King's court and protected the humanists. Supported by Marguerite de Navarre, Jacques Colin facilitated Amyot's accession to the chair of Latin and Greek in the University of Bourges; then Amyot wrote his first translations from Greek, namely Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* and *The Trojan women*,<sup>19</sup> Plutarch's *On talkativeness*, which he dedicated to Bochetel in 1542,<sup>20</sup> and Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, based on the *editio princeps*, in 1547. At the same time, Francis I, who had enjoyed his reading of the first handwritten translations of the *Lives of Theseus and Romulus* or of *Philopoemen and Flamininus*, strongly encouraged him to translate all of the *Lives*. When the King died, Amyot left for Italy and took advantage of his stay (from 1548 to 1552) to consult manuscripts, especially Plutarch's.<sup>21</sup> Back in France, he became the preceptor of Henri II's two younger sons, who were to become Charles IX and Henri III, and he got back to the translation of the *Vies des hommes illustres grecs et romains comparées l'une avec l'autre par Plutarque de Chéronée traduites du grec au français* – which he completed and published in 1559<sup>22</sup> – in order to teach them humanities, as he wrote in his dedication to Henri II. He thus took part, as he also wrote, in the continuation of King Francis' work by his son, as he tried to enrich the French language and the blossoming humanities. In the address to the reader,

<sup>17</sup> Aulotte (1965: 53–128).

<sup>18</sup> On “clarification” (“elucidating”) and “éclairage” (“illustrating”), see Berman (2012: 177–181).

<sup>19</sup> His very first translation, that of *Hecuba*, was still based on the Latin translation: more in de Nardis (1996).

<sup>20</sup> BNF, Ms. fr. Nouv. Acquis. 10843; the dedication was copied in Plazenet (2008: 675–676).

<sup>21</sup> Sturel (1908: 269–280) and Aulotte (1965: 159–162).

<sup>22</sup> <http://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/resolve/display/bsb10139828.html> (last accessed 4 March 2019).

which follows the dedication, he laid out the lessons of History, distinguishing them, as Plutarch did, from those of “Life”, which are “more private”, and more centred on “that which has its source in the inner part of man”. He also recalled how hard the establishment of a text can prove to be, and talked of the task of collating manuscripts – which he carried out in libraries in Venice and Rome – and of the need to rely on conjectures in *loci desperati*. Finally, apologising for the style of his translation, which might be less “fluid” than that of his previous productions, he specified that “a good translator’s duty is not only to accurately translate the author’s thought, but also to give a certain image and an outline of the latter’s style and mode of expression”, but he immediately qualified that statement, asserting that the French translation will be nevertheless easier to understand than the original Greek text was “because Plutarch’s own writing is more incisive, more scholarly and more condensed than it is clear, polished and easy to understand”.

At that time he was probably also thinking about the features that are specific to French, for he was precisely writing the *Projet de l’éloquence royale, composé pour Henri III*, which was published only in 1805.<sup>23</sup> Appointed Grand Almoner in 1560 by the new King, Charles IX, notwithstanding his important tasks, he kept correcting the *Lives*, which were reprinted in 1565, 1567 and, after his death, in 1619, and also tackled the corpus of the *Moralia* around 1565: the *Œuvres morales et meslées* were published in two in-folio volumes in 1572,<sup>24</sup> once again by Vascosan, and dedicated to Charles IX.

In this dedication, he readdressed considerations on style and content that were already present in the opening of the *Lives*, and brought forth his own reflections as a preceptor so as to show the young prince the way to “the knowledge of God and of humanities”. He then chose the knowledge and reading of history, along with the *Œuvres morales* of Plutarch of Chaeronea, “a very solemn historian and philosopher”; it is worth quoting his description at length:

Such books are all the more pleasant as they are embellished by a beautiful language, and enriched with examples taken from all of antiquity, and as they are the results of learned men’s ingenious inventions, who aimed for both pleasure and edification; they are sometimes more pleasant to hear for the princes’ delicate ears than the Holy Scriptures, which seem to command masterfully, because of their simplicity deprived of any language ornaments, rather than to persuade gracefully. And yet it would

<sup>23</sup> <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k11674om.r> (last accessed 4 March 2019) and Amyot (1992).

<sup>24</sup> <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k53612c.r> (last accessed 4 March 2019).

sometimes be useful to princes to entertain their reason as they read such writings, which tend to the same purpose as the holy books, namely to make man virtuous.

The “beautiful language” was here all the more difficult to reach as the subject was frequently abstruse, the “deficiency, corruption and miserable depravation which can be found almost everywhere in the original Greek text” greater than in the *Lives*, and the style more often still, unclear and rough. However, his efforts were rewarded and the *Oeuvres morales* were republished in 1574 (six octavo volumes, which was a popular size), 1575, 1581 (under the new title of *Oeuvres morales et philosophiques*) and 1618<sup>25</sup> – the last one was a posthumous edition, established and augmented by Claude Morel with the translation of *On rivers*, which is nowadays considered as apocryphal –, with excerpts from the *On the soul*, collected by Olympiodoros, and with fragments on love from Stobaios (= fr. 134–138 Sandbach).

Looking at the margins of his Basel copy is enough to judge his work as a philologist: Amyot above all focused on conjectures and textual variants, most of which are written without any indications, but sometimes refer to other authors (*alii*) or manuscripts, or are accompanied by a sceptical *puto* (“I think”), or *forte* (“perhaps”), which rather indicate personal suggestions;<sup>26</sup> some of them are still taken into account in our editions.<sup>27</sup> There are also references which identify Plutarch's quotes or mention other texts on the same topic: Amyot's aim was always to make the meaning of the text more explicit or to improve its form. In total more than fifty authors, both Latin and Greek, from each genre and period, from Homer to the *Suda*, were used. References to Plutarch himself were also added – internal references to the *Moralia* (with the numbers of the page in the margin) and to the *Lives*.<sup>28</sup> In that case, and also for the identification of quotes, details were sometimes added in the translation itself.

Furthermore, a three-fold goal can be identified in the translator's work: elucidating the *realia*, using a precise vocabulary and shaping the syntax and the style of the text. Amyot used internal explanatory glosses, whereas we resort to external cultural notes, in order to make the ancient world and its customs more accessible to the “modern” readership. He thus often gave geographical indications about the places mentioned – plains, city, coast, island

<sup>25</sup> Two volumes: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k1146503.ret/bpt6k114651g.r> (last accessed 4 March 2019).

<sup>26</sup> Aulotte (1965: 170) notes that the doubt can also be about a conjecture which he found.

<sup>27</sup> Example of *De Pyth. or.*: Frazier (2004), of *Bellone an pace*: Frazier (2013).

<sup>28</sup> More on the use of the *Lives*, see Frazier (2017).

or promontory – and also about the characters' identity: thus *barbaron* (*On the glory of Athens* 345C) is explained rather than translated when Amyot wrote “this <Great King> Barbarian <Xerxes>”.<sup>29</sup> Here the specification deals with a historical figure; elsewhere it may shed light on political and social realities. Thus, a single word, *bōmous* (*ibid.*, 348E), is translated as “the altars <standing on the platforms>”, when theatrical performances are mentioned: the remark that he added here has both an elucidatory value and a concrete and visual dimension;<sup>30</sup> the adjective *isopsēphon* (*ibid.* 351A, “having an equal vote with [them]”), alluding to the rights bestowed by the Athenians on the other Greek peoples when establishing the Second Confederacy (in 377 BC), is developed at length: (Athenians) “provided all of Greece with as many votes and suffrages, <during the assembly of the States General, as they retained for themselves>”. This last example is typical of his ongoing efforts to find equivalents for the political roles, the measures and the currencies, the dates, the places and even animal and vegetable species.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, his choice to keep Greek words as such or to adapt them into French raises the broader issue of the enrichment of the French vocabulary. It also partakes of an even wider process labelled by Berman “grécisation du français”<sup>32</sup> which consists not only in borrowing from Greek, but also in directly creating new (lexical, syntactic and stylistic) forms in French on the model of Greek.

Syntactic matters, such as the organisation of sentences, the translation of particles<sup>33</sup> or their substitution with a subordinating conjunction, which entailed the creation of long rhetorical periods,<sup>34</sup> played an important part in the elaboration of the final text; preserving or creating recurring lexical forms, which structures the text and underlines its meaning, was also of great importance. The two following examples will enable us to see, so to speak, the translator at work. In the first one (*Advice on marriage* 138C), the repetition is already present in the Greek text:

καὶ γὰρ οἱ παλαιοὶ τῇ Ἀφροδίτῃ τὸν Ἐρμῆν συγκαθίδρυσαν ..., τήν τε Πειθώ  
καὶ τὰς Χάριτας, ἵνα πειθούντες διαπράττωνται παρ' ἄλληλων ἢ βούλονται, μὴ  
μαχόμενοι μηδὲ φιλονεικοῦντες.

<sup>29</sup> Here and everywhere else brackets indicate additions.

<sup>30</sup> On these tendencies, particularly notable in the narratives, see Frazier (2013: 102–104).

<sup>31</sup> More examples, see Frazier (2013).

<sup>32</sup> Berman (2012: 194–204). On Rabelais’ “grécisation”, see Menini (2008).

<sup>33</sup> Denizot (2018).

<sup>34</sup> Frazier (2018).

Indeed, the ancients gave Hermes a place at the side of Aphrodite ...; and they also assigned a place there to **Persuasion** and the **Graces**, so that married people should succeed in attaining their mutual desires **by persuasion** and not by fighting and quarrelling. (tr. F.C. Babbitt)

Cest pourquoy les anciens ont voulu que <l'image de> Venus fust colloquée joignant celle de Mercure ...: encore mettoient ils avec ces deux images là, celles des **Graces** et de <la deesse d'eloquence> Suadelle, à fin que les conjoints par mariage **eussent gracieusement** ce qu'ils voudroient l'un de l'autre, non pas en hargnant et noisant l'un contre l'autre. (1572, 145D–E)

In the same way as Aphrodite and Hermes are translated as Venus and Mercury, *Peithō* (“Persuasion”) is translated into its Latin equivalent, *Suadela*, adapted in French into “Suadelle” – the word is rather rare, so that the deity's identity is specified through the expression “goddess of eloquence”; but instead of associating with her the favourable action ensuring the spouses' mutual understanding, Amyot replaced the participle “suadant” (“persuading”), that would perfectly translate the Greek word, with the adverb “gracefully”, which derives from the name of the other goddesses who are mentioned, namely the Graces.

After transposing, Amyot drew on (re)creation in the second example (*Dialogue on love* 752D), when Pisias, who promotes the love of boys, derides Daphneus, who loves women, just as Plutarch, who is supposed to have corrupted him:

Δαφναῖον δ' ὁρῶ ταῦτὸν πάσχοντα τῷ χαλκῷ· καὶ γάρ ἐκεῖνος οὐχ οὕτως ὑπὸ τοῦ πυρὸς ὡς ὑπὸ τοῦ πεπυρωμένου χαλκοῦ καὶ φέοντος (a), ἀν ἐπιχέη (b) τις, ἀνατήκεται (1) καὶ φεῖ (a') συνεξυγραινόμενος (c) (1' = a'+c). καὶ τοῦτον οὐκ ἐνοχλεῖ τὸ Λυσάνδρας κάλλος, ἀλλὰ συνδιακεκαυμένῳ καὶ γέμοντι πυρὸς ἥδη πολὺν χρόνον [ό] πλησιάζων καὶ ἀπτόμενος ἀναπίμπλαται· καὶ δῆλος ἔστιν, εἰ μὴ ταχὺ φύγοι πρὸς ἡμᾶς, συντακησόμενος (2).

But Daphneus, I perceive, is acting like copper. It is a fact that copper is not so much affected by fire as it is by molten (a) copper; when this is poured over it (b) it softens bit by bit (1) and becomes fluid (1'). And it is not Lysandra's beauty that troubles him. Rather by his proximity and contact with one who is all ablaze and burning he is now himself catching fire. It's evident that if he doesn't come running to us, **he too will go soft** (2). (tr. F.C. Babbitt)

Il m'est avis que je voy advenir à Daphneus ce qui advient au cuivre, lequel ne se **fond pas** (1) tant par la force du feu, comme par d'autre cuivre **fondu** (a?) qui le fait **fondre** quand et luy (1?), si on le verse dessus (b). Aussi la beauté de Lysandra <ne le fond et> ne le travaille pas tant, comme fait ce qu'il s'est approché long temps, et attaché à quelqu'un qui estoit tout enflammé et tout plein de feu, dont il s'est ainsi remply luy mesme, et est tout evident, que si bien tost il ne s'en retire devers nous, il se **fondra entierement** (2). (1572, 601H–602A)

The metaphorical meaning of the verb “to melt” is well attested in love poetry; this word is only used twice in the Greek text and placed in key positions: it is the first verb of the vehicle (1), in the main clause, and the final participle of the tenor (2). Other verbs (a, b, c) can be found between the two, which evoke the liquid state of molten metal, but disappear (except for b) from the French text and are replaced by the sole verb “to melt” – thus, “*blazing and fluid copper*” becomes “*molten copper*” – and the polyptoton “autre cuivre *fondu* qui le fait *fondre*” (“another *molten copper* that *melts it*”) creates a stylistic effect that mirrors the contact between the two different kinds of copper. The same framing device is also present in the following syntagm: the sentence ends on the idea of fusion, as in the Greek original text, but Amyot expressed the same idea in the beginning of the sentence, by adding a first verb “qui le fait *fondre*” (“that melts it”), which is absent from the Greek text. Here the translation is almost a rewriting and the French text itself can be literarily and stylistically analysed.<sup>35</sup>

To conclude, in order to summarise all the different levels of the translator's interventions, a few words may be said about the use of the so-called “doublets synonymiques” (“pairs of synonyms”).<sup>36</sup> On the lexical level, this process enables a form of “semantic exhaustivity”: for instance, the preverbed form *diespeiran* (*On the Pythia's prophecies* 401F) is translated by “they had cut (*dia-*) and sown (*-espeiran*)”. At the level of the sentence, this duplication, which can result in ternary expressions when a doublet is already present in Greek, corresponds both to the aesthetics of *copia* and to rhythmical needs: the Greek sentences καλὸν γάρ ή φιλία καὶ ἀστεῖον. ή δ' ἥδονή κοινὸν καὶ ἀνελεύθερον (*Dialogue on love* 751B, “For friendship is a beautiful and courteous relationship, but mere pleasure is base and unworthy of a free man”, tr. F.C. Babbitt) are translated by this sentence in French: “par ce que l'amitié est chose belle, honnête et gentille (with an ascendant series, as a substitute for the hyperbaton),

<sup>35</sup> More details and examples, see Frazier (2017 and 2018).

<sup>36</sup> On Plutarch's use of such devices, see Teodorsson (2000); by Amyot, see Guerrier (2018).

et la volupté chose basse, sale et vile”<sup>37</sup> (with a striking coda on three monosyllabic words, instead of the long Greek adjective). Finally, as far as meaning is concerned, both pairs and omissions underscore that some notions changed from antiquity to the Renaissance. The studies on this particular point are not very numerous yet,<sup>38</sup> and it will require the attention of sixteenth-century specialists in the years to come since it is one of the important features of Amyot’s reception.

### 3 Amyot’s Legacy

During the years following its publication, Amyot’s translation took two forms: François Le Tort published selected extracts of it, the *Trésor des Morales*, in 1577 for the members of the French Parliament,<sup>39</sup> whereas Simon Goulart, a Calvinist pastor, took it as a basis for his own commented edition of the *Oeuvres morales et meslées* in 1581 and, two years later, of the *Vies des Hommes illustres*. These so-called “contrefaçons” (“pirated editions”) were constantly republished afterwards, right up until the middle of the seventeenth century.<sup>40</sup> His aim was not to revise the translation, but to make it more easily readable, inserting summaries, marginal notes and indices. Indices added coherence to the volumes, favouring internal cross-materials,<sup>41</sup> and marginal notes tried to highlight how finely Plutarch “wove his discourses”, that is to say the structuring of his argument, but actually often conferred on it a logic that owed more to the modern commentator than to the Greek author. By this regulation of the discourse, Goulart intended to promote a moral and providential reading and to prevent his reader from following the alluring path of paganism that led nowhere. As a matter of fact, many people came to know Plutarch’s works through this Christian interpretation, which was much more radical than Amyot’s.

His other main legacy can be seen through the use of his translation by great authors, Montaigne’s most of all (see Edelman in this volume). He was full of praise for Amyot in the fourth Chapter of Book II of his *Essays* and mentioned up to five hundred times the “French Plutarch” in his whole works. As for the *Lives*, he included acute reflections on the comparisons in the end of the

<sup>37</sup> “Because friendship is a beautiful, honest and kind thing, whereas delight is a low, foul and vile one”.

<sup>38</sup> See Margolin (1986), Tournon-Guerrier (2007), Guerrier (2012).

<sup>39</sup> Frazier (2008).

<sup>40</sup> Sturel (1908: 112–119), Aulotte (1965: 355–357).

<sup>41</sup> Carabin (2003).

chapter entitled “Défense de Plutarque et de Sénèque” (“Defence of Plutarch and Seneca”, II.32)<sup>42</sup> or made use of their interpretation of daily life and of the “signes de l’âme” (“signs of the soul”, *Alex.* 1.3) in the invention of the “essay” (I.50). Moreover, Plutarch’s oeuvre added both to his reflection upon historians and “moral science” in chapter II.10, and to his own practice as a writer – he thus identified common features between the intriguing trajectory of some of his chapters and a treatise such as *On the sign of Socrates* (III.9). Plutarch, as a thinker “enquerant plutost qu’instruisant” (“more given to inquiry than instruction”), also guided his philosophical reflexions, as can be seen in one of his longest and most philosophical essays, the *Apologie de Raymond Sebon* (II.12). Not only did he use Plutarch to defend animals but he also paraphrased entire passages from Amyot’s translation of the *On the E’ at Delphi* in the last pages of his essay, in order to meditate on the contingency of the world and of the subject who resides in it. The same theme, though tackled differently, closes the chapter “De la vanité” (On vanity, III.9). We can also find a reflection on the limits of the field of possibilities in the previously mentioned chapter (II.32). Finally, we cannot but mention one last literary genius who was influenced by Plutarch and, indirectly, by Amyot: Shakespeare conceived the plots – and entire scenes – of *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Antony and Cleopatra* thanks to North’s translation, published in 1579 and directly based on the French version.<sup>43</sup>

Eventually, at the level of linguistics, leaving aside Bachet de Méritzac’s excessive criticisms of Amyot’s knowledge of Greek, and focusing on the French language, Amyot was deemed representative of “Atticism”, opposing Vigenère’s artistic prose<sup>44</sup> in the debate on classical style that developed in the seventeenth century. The judgements on him differed: Vaugelas, in his *Remarques sur la langue française*, written in 1647, and then Godeau deplored that Amyot’s language should have been so archaic, whereas Sorel, Racine, Fénelon et La Bruyère appreciated it. However, A. Dacier retranslated the *Lives* only in 1721; the Abbot Ricard then set about translating the complete works at the end of the century (1783). His foreword to the reader regretted Amyot’s being “excessively careful with taking the original wording as a pattern, which often makes his style awkward and abstruse”, but acknowledged his “grace, energy and guilelessness, which will always arouse the connoisseur’s admiration and

<sup>42</sup> Konstantinovic (1988).

<sup>43</sup> See V. Worth in Balard (1986: 285–295).

<sup>44</sup> Guerrier-Frazier (2008: 193); see also, in the twentieth century, the opposition invented by Céline between Rabelais and Amyot: Menini (2018).

interest", contrasting his "quaint elegance" with "Dacier's modern language, ... less pleasant and colourful". His impressions were rather confirmed in the twentieth century, since Amyot's translation of the *Lives* was republished by the distinguished Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, and since the modern specialists of translation agree on the fact that his work can be considered a model of a "great translation".

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# The First Editions of Plutarch's Works, and the Translation by Thomas North

*Michele Lucchesi*

During the Middle Ages, in Western Europe Plutarch almost faded into oblivion as a consequence of the dramatic decline of ancient Greek knowledge. As Becchi has noted, only from the beginning of the twelfth century onwards did manuscripts containing a large part of Plutarch's *Moralia* start to circulate in the Latin West. That was the case of the codex Vind. Phil. Gr. 129 and, a century later, of the codex Ambr. C 126 inf., which was originally prepared at Constantinople under Maximos Planoudes' supervision in 1294–1295.<sup>1</sup> It is also plausible to think that Latin translations of the *Moralia* were produced in Norman Sicily, as one can assume from the preface to the translation of Plato's *Phaedo* by Henry Aristippus (1156), who mentioned the possibility of having Plutarch's works (probably the *Moralia*) at his disposal.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, codices of the *Parallel lives* became available only at the end of the fourteenth century, as is proved by the history of manuscripts such as the Canon. Gr. 93 + Ambr. D 538 inf., which was transcribed in 1362 and from which the Laur. 69.3 + Laur. conv. soppr. 169 derived, being copied in 1398 at Coluccio Salutati's request.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the Middle Ages, however, both the Greek texts and the Latin translations of Plutarch's works had an extremely limited readership in the Latin-speaking countries of Europe. Plutarch was mostly known through

<sup>1</sup> Becchi (2009: 11–13). On the limited knowledge of Plutarch in the Middle Ages in the Latin West, see Garzya (1988: 9–38), (1998: 15–17), Hirzel (1912: 74–111). More on the codex Vind. Phil. Gr. 129, its supposed dating to the twelfth or thirteenth century, and its provenance from Calabria or Sicily, in Cavallo (1980: 192), Irigoin (1987: CCXLIX–CCLI, n. 4), Martinelli Tempesta (2006: 94–95). On the codex Ambr. C 126 inf., see Rollo (2008). More on this topic in Pérez Martín and Xenophontos in this volume.

<sup>2</sup> See Becchi (2009: 11, n. 2). Cf. Wilson (1996: 209–217).

<sup>3</sup> See Manfredini (2013: 21–22). More on the manuscript tradition of Plutarch's *Parallel lives* can be found in Manfredini (1977, 1981, 1983, 1987, 1988, 1990a, 1990b, 1993, 1994a, 1994b, 1996), Ziegler (1907). In general, on the early revival of Plutarch's *Parallel lives* in the Latin West at the end of the fourteenth century and on the crucial role played by Coluccio Salutati and Manuel Chrysoloras, see Becchi (2009: 20–22), Berti (1998), Pade (2007: 1.61–178), Reynolds-Wilson (1991<sup>3</sup>: 134–136).

the indirect tradition, that is, through the references of Latin authors such as Gellius, Macrobius, Arnobius, or Jerome.<sup>4</sup>

At the beginning of the Renaissance, conversely, Plutarch's texts became more easily accessible to readers in Western Europe. At that time, especially Italian humanists used to travel to Greece and Constantinople, where they entered into possession of manuscripts of classical works, which subsequently ended up in Italian public libraries or private collections. After the fall of Constantinople and the end of the Byzantine empire in 1453, many Greek scholars moved to Western Europe (mainly to Italy), where they taught ancient Greek language and literature. They also brought with them numerous important codices and documents of the classical tradition.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the increased availability of 'new' Greek texts, together with the renewed cultural climate of the time, stimulated a revival of classical studies and made reading classical literary, philosophical, or historical works fashionable among the European cultural elites. Plutarch, in particular, became one of the most celebrated ancient writers, whose dialogues, treatises, and biographies were highly appreciated as embodying the quintessence of the ancient Greek spirit. Not only were the *Moralia* and the *Parallel lives* employed in ancient Greek language courses because of their stylistic traits, they were also read in their own right as reflecting an idea of society centred on man rather than on religion. Plutarch, that is, was regarded as a humanist *ante litteram* who could instil in modern readers ideals of courage, heroism, and love of virtue together with many other ethical and civic values.<sup>6</sup>

One should clarify, however, *how* Plutarch was read. Indeed, until the end of the fifteenth century, only a restricted elite of European scholars had a good level of competence in ancient Greek and, therefore, was able to approach Plutarch's original texts directly. It was certainly easier for the wider audience to read them in translation. This explains why, together with a larger supply and demand of Plutarchan manuscripts, since the beginning of the Renaissance there was a considerable growth in the number of translations of the *Moralia*.

<sup>4</sup> See Becchi (2009: 13), La Matina (1999), Pade (2007: 1.37–60), Stok (1999).

<sup>5</sup> On the renaissance of Greek studies in Italy and on the activities of Greek humanists and scribes of this period, see Becchi (2009: 20–22), Bolgar (1954: 265–393), Cammelli (1941a, 1941b, 1954), Harris (1995), Monfasani (1995), Reynolds-Wilson (1991<sup>3</sup>: 146–154), Wilson (1992, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> On the study of ancient Greek in the Renaissance, see Ciccolella (2008: 75–149). In general, on classical education as a social status symbol, see Houston (2002: 142–143), Kallendorf (2007: 41), Stray (2007: 5–6), Waquet (2001: 179–256). More on the reasons for Plutarch's revival in Becchi (2009: 14–17), Cesarini Martinelli (2000), Garin (1967: 5–45 and 71–157), Magnino (1992), Pade (2007: 1.61–112).

and the *Parallel lives*, a phenomenon that demonstrates the enormous prestige enjoyed by Plutarch all across Europe. On the one hand, numerous humanists (especially in Italy) devoted their efforts to rendering into Latin Plutarch's works individually or in small groups, without giving much consideration to the entirety of Plutarch's corpus or, in the case of the *Parallel lives*, to seriality and book structure.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, translations from ancient Greek into vernacular languages were produced too, something that further boosted Plutarch's popularity not only among *literati* and bibliophiles but also among aristocrats, politicians, diplomats, courtiers, clerics, and so forth.<sup>8</sup>

From the beginning of the sixteenth century, the method of publishing Plutarch's texts changed: the first printed editions of the entire Plutarchan oeuvre were issued, providing greater, deeper, and easier access to Plutarch's historiography and philosophical thought.<sup>9</sup> Plutarch, then, was 'discovered' as a multifaceted author and his writings could be admired in their complexity as a unitary body of work, whereas before especially the *Moralia* (though partly the *Parallel lives* too) appeared fragmented. Consequently, the more Plutarch was valued, the more erudites and learned readers felt the need to have editions that featured the texts accurately and precisely. Similarly, scholars also started to publish translations of Plutarch's complete works into Latin as much as into modern languages, which were of superior quality than the humanistic translations of the previous centuries. In this case too, the main aim was to adhere to Plutarch's thought and, at the same time, to write books that could be elegant and compelling to read.

While, however, printed editions and Latin translations, becoming philosophically more reliable, were predominantly welcomed by readers interested in the textual research on Plutarch, the vernacular translations of the *Moralia* and the *Parallel lives*, which were now deemed a proper literary art form, reached a more diverse audience and, more importantly, exerted a great influence on modern European literatures. In this respect, one of the most significant cases, together with Jacques Amyot's *Vies des hommes illustres* (1559–1565) and *Opera moralia* (1572), which are discussed by Frazier and Guerrier in this volume, was that of Sir Thomas North's English translation of Plutarch's *Parallel lives*. Since

<sup>7</sup> General surveys on the humanistic Latin translations of Plutarch's works can be found in Becchi (2009), Bevegni (1994), Giustiniani (1961), Stok (1998), Pade (2007). Humanistic Latin translations are also discussed by Becchi in this volume.

<sup>8</sup> On the vernacular translations of Plutarch, see Costa (2012), Pade (2007).

<sup>9</sup> Among the many scholarly contributions on the impact of the printing revolution on book trade and circulation in early modern Europe, one can refer to Braida (2010), Eisenstein (1979, 2005<sup>2</sup>), Fantuzzi (1992), Febvre-Martin (1958), Johns (1998: 1–265), Nuovo (2003<sup>3</sup>), Quondam (1983).

North's version had a profound impact on Shakespeare and modern British literature, it will be examined in detail in the last part of this chapter.

## 1 The First Printed Editions of Plutarch's Works

A seminal event in the history of the reception of Plutarch in the early modern period is represented by the publication of the *editio princeps* of the *Moralia* in 1509 by Manutius' Aldine Press in Venice.<sup>10</sup> This edition was supervised by the Greek humanist Demetrios Doucas (c. 1480–c. 1527), who later taught ancient Greek in Spain, and was completed with the help of Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536), the eminent Dutch theologian and teacher, and Girolamo Aleandro (1480–1542), an Italian cardinal who compiled a *Lexicon Graeco-Latinum* (1512), but became famous as a fierce opponent of Martin Luther. The general title and the indication concerning both a list of Plutarch's works and their content (*Plutarchi opuscula LXXXII. Index moralium omnium, et eorum quae in ipsis tractantur, habetur hoc quaternione*) confirm that, just as in the case of Plutarch's medieval copyists and editors like Maximos Planoudes, for early modern editors too the common denominator of Plutarch's non-biographical writings was the ethical dimension.<sup>11</sup> The generic term “*opuscula*”, moreover, seems to refer to each work's length and scope – more limited than those of the *Parallel lives* or of other philosophers' *magna opera* – as much as to the collection's composite nature and variety of topics. This last aspect also emerges from the order of the ninety-two *opuscula*, which were arranged casually, following the same sequence of the manuscripts used for the editing process, without adopting any consistent thematic or formal criterion.

In 1517, on the other hand, the *editio princeps* of the *Parallel lives* was brought out by Filippo Giunti (1450–1517) in Florence. This publication, which was edited by the Florentine scholar Eufrosino Bonino (also the author of a Greek grammar book entitled *Enchiridion Gramatices*), reproduced the text of two manuscripts: the Laur. conv. soppr. 206 and 169.<sup>12</sup> This Giuntine is usually considered worse than the later editions of the *Parallel lives*. In general, the Giunti publishing house did not produce volumes as accurate and refined as those of Manutius. The text of Plutarch's *Lives*, in particular, contained far too many mistakes. Yet, one should fully acknowledge that the Giunti family, especially

<sup>10</sup> On Aldus Manutius (1449–1515), see Davies (1999), Dionisotti (1995), Lowry (1979).

<sup>11</sup> On Plutarch and Planoudes, see Pérez Martín in this volume with further bibliographical references.

<sup>12</sup> See Manfredini (2013: 24, n. 47). On Bonino, see Tiraboschi (1785<sup>2</sup>: 83).

Filippo and his son Bernardo, were able to make ancient biography, a genre already appreciated by the Florentine intellectual circles, popular and more readily available to the readers.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Filippo Giunti viewed Plutarch's biographies of ancient Greek and Roman great men as inspirational books, which offered the readers examples of moral virtue to imitate. Such a concept of the *Parallel lives'* ethical usefulness was clearly formulated in the prefatory letter of the Giuntine, where Giunti expressed his gratitude to Marcello Virgilio for lending a codex containing the text of the *Parallel lives*. There one can read: "Because of the infinite number of examples of illustrious Greek and Roman men that can be found everywhere in those (*Lives*), a most excellent mode of life will be adopted" (*Propter infinita tot illustrium romanorum graecorumque virorum exempla quae in illis passim inveniuntur, optimum vitae suae institutum esse aquisitaturum*). Indeed, this approach to the *Parallel lives* appears to be consistent with Plutarch's numerous statements about the moral nature and purpose of his biographies, a crucial aspect of which consisted in the readers' imitation of the characters' virtues (see, in particular, *Plu. Aem.* 1.1–4, *Alex.* 1.1–3, *Per.* 1.4–2.4).<sup>14</sup>

Nonetheless, while Filippo Giunti recognised the pedagogical and formative implications of the *Parallel lives*, Bonino, the chief editor, does not seem to have paid due attention to parallelism, as he overlooked the comparative structure of the *Lives* of each pair. In this respect, the title given to the series is emblematic: *Tou sophotatou Ploutarchou Parallelon. Bioi Romaion kai Ellenon 49. Sapientissimi Plutarchi parallellum, Vitae Romanorum et Graecorum quadraginta nouem*. Despite taking into account the abstract idea of comparison, Giunti and Bonino simply called the biographies *Bioi/Vitae*. The total number of forty-nine, moreover, as one can notice from the table of contents, included the unparalleled *Aratus*, *Artaxerxes*, *Otho*, and *Galba*, and the *Ezagoras*, which was wrongly attributed to Plutarch, but was in fact written by Isocrates. The *Lives* were listed one after the other in the same order of the manuscripts (those of the so-called *recensio tripartita*, that is, in three volumes), being considered individually instead of being regarded as pairs made by two halves joined together, with each pair forming a book.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the text was printed without internal subdivisions in chapters, so that prologues and final formal comparisons (*synkrisis*) – the sections where Plutarch openly discusses the similarities

<sup>13</sup> See MacDonald (2001: 15–19). More on the Giunti publishing house in Decia (1978–1979), Pettas (2012), Richardson (1994: 79–89, 127–139, 155–181). On the popularity of biography in the Italian Renaissance, see McLaughlin (2002).

<sup>14</sup> On imitation in Plutarch's *Parallel lives*, see Duff (1999: 13–51).

<sup>15</sup> On the *recensio tripartita*, see Manfredini (2013: 18–25) with further bibliographical references.

and the differences between the Greek and the Roman heroes – were not distinguished from the body of narration.

The Giuntine edition of the *Parallel lives*, therefore, on the one hand highlighted the moralism of Plutarch's biographies, but on the other hand did not bring out their intrinsically comparative nature. In this regard, the way of reading Plutarch's biographies was not too distant from that behind the production of Byzantine and medieval manuscripts of the *Lives* nor from that of the first humanist translators, as we shall see later in this chapter. Indeed, this editorial practice, which did not emphasise the parallelism of the *Lives*, was not abandoned by later editors; in fact, to some extent it is still being continued by contemporary publishers.<sup>16</sup> Only in the last decades has Plutarchan scholarship seriously reflected on the book structure of the *Parallel lives* and has gained a new appreciation for the strong interconnection between the biographies paired together.<sup>17</sup>

In 1519, the Aldine edition of the *Parallel lives*, prepared by one of Aldus Manutius' main associates, Gian Francesco d'Asola, also known as Francesco Asolano (1498–1557), came out and represented a genuine progress compared to the Giuntine.<sup>18</sup> In the prefatory letter addressed to Pietro Bembo, d'Asola expressly criticised Giunti's work. Two were his main concerns: firstly, the Florentine editors published Xenophon's *Agesilaus* and Isocrates' *Evagoras* as biographies of the *Parallel lives* series, mistakenly crediting them to Plutarch; secondly, they presented the *Lives* in the same wrong order (*nullo ordine velut tumultaria opera*) that they could find in the manuscripts at their disposal, without trying to understand what Plutarch's original sequence might have been.<sup>19</sup> Thus, Gian Francesco d'Asola collated more and better manuscripts (mostly from Venice) than the other editors so as to correct and improve the text, and attempted an interpretation of Plutarch's authorial intentions by putting the *Lives* in the chronological order of the Roman characters (*ordine hoc*,

<sup>16</sup> E.g. Plutarch's biographies published in the Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics series for the Cambridge University Press or the translations of Plutarch's Greek and Roman Lives – variously assembled, but never maintaining the pair structure – in the Penguin Classics series for Penguin Books.

<sup>17</sup> In this regard, Duff has often been very vocal on this topic; see in particular Duff (2011: 213–216 and 262–265) with further bibliography.

<sup>18</sup> On Gian Francesco d'Asola, Aldus Manutius' brother-in-law, who took the helm of the Aldine Press from 1517 to 1529 after Aldus' death, see Cataldi Palau (1998).

<sup>19</sup> In fact, while Eufrosino Bonino confused the paternity of the *Evagoras*, he did not print Xenophon's *Agesilaus*, but the Plutarchan *Life of Agesilaus* followed by the *Life of Pompey*; in this respect, Gian Francesco d'Asola was himself wrong about the Giuntine. The same criticism was repeated in d'Asola's preface to the Aldine edition of Xenophon's works, published in 1525, which was preceded by the Giuntine *editio princeps* in 1516.

*quem a Plutarcho etiam seruatum fuisse contenderim propter seriem temporum Romanorum).*<sup>20</sup>

Yet, while the accusation of insufficient philological accuracy appears to be justified, that concerning the lack of order is unsubstantiated. For creating a sequence based on the chronology of the Roman heroes, as d'Asola did, was as arbitrary a choice as putting the *Lives* in the chronological order of the Greek characters, as was in the manuscripts of the *recensio bipartita* (in two volumes). The same can be said for the rough ethnic subdivision of the Greek subject (that is, the pairs with the Athenian heroes came first, then those with the Spartan heroes) with a chronological arrangement within each group, which is present in the manuscripts of the *recensio tripartita* and the Giuntine maintained.<sup>21</sup> None of these criteria corresponds to Plutarch's initial order of composition of the pairs nor to their sequence of publication, two aspects of the *Parallel lives* that modern scholarship has tried to ascertain, by approximation, without reaching absolutely conclusive results.<sup>22</sup>

Thanks to the revised Greek text, derived from the editors' research on the manuscript tradition, and the "new" *octavo* format, much more manageable, portable, and affordable than manuscripts and folios, the Aldine editions of the *Moralia* and the *Parallel lives* brought Plutarch much greater fame than in the past.<sup>23</sup> With his oeuvre – or, to put it more accurately, the part that survived and was transmitted – being more easily accessible in its entirety, Plutarch could now be fully esteemed as a classical philosopher and writer of wide-ranging intellectual interests. An audience of learned people – mainly *literati*, philosophers, academics, and members of the Church hierarchy and the clergy, and so forth, who could read ancient Greek – broader than in the previous decades could draw inspiration from Plutarch's ethical principles, his philosophical reflection on concrete moral questions, his study of the character of great natures, and his examples of virtuous conduct. At the same time, Plutarch was also viewed as an extremely important source for the history of

<sup>20</sup> Just as the Giuntine, the Aldine too had no internal subdivision of the *Lives* in chapters and no separation between proem, body of narration, and final *synkrisis* in each pair.

<sup>21</sup> See Duff (2011: 260), Manfredini (2013: 14–15); one should notice, however, that the ethnic subdivision is not consistently respected, especially in the second and third volumes.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Jones (1966), Nikolaidis (2005). In this case too, contemporary publishers adopt different solutions: if the Teubner edition preserves the same succession of *Lives* as in the *recensio tripartita* (an ordering by city or country of origin of the Greek characters), both the Loeb and the Budé editions keep the chronological order of the Greek heroes, despite the fact that such an arrangement is still different from the traditional one.

<sup>23</sup> On Manutius' choice of printing classical works in *octavo* format and the cost difference between manuscripts and printed volumes, see Baldacchini (2001: 19–30), Barker (1992: 43–64 and 114–118), Davies (1999: 40–50), Richardson (1999: 107–157).

the Graeco-Roman world and its protagonists, with whom Renaissance humanists and cultured men, not only in Italy but all over Europe, felt they could establish an ideal continuity. Plutarch's volumes for the Aldine Press, then, provided a more solid bridge towards antiquity and its invaluable spiritual treasure.

For decades, the Aldine editions of the *Moralia* and the *Parallel lives* were considered standard texts, despite the fact that many emendations inserted by their various editors were later rejected as wrong on the basis of other manuscripts, which had become available in the meantime. Such a conspicuous success made other publishing houses prefer simply to reprint the Aldine versions, making some textual changes and corrections. One can mention the Basel edition of the *Parallel lives* for the Andreas Cratander and Johann Bebel publishing house, first issued in 1533 and then reprinted in 1560, or that of the *Moralia*, published again at Basel by Froben Press in 1542.<sup>24</sup>

Only in 1572 did a proper new edition of Plutarch's writings go to the press: this was the complete edition of the *Moralia* and the *Parallel lives* in thirteen volumes issued in Geneva by the French scholar Henri Estienne, also known as Henricus Stephanus (c. 1528–1598).<sup>25</sup> Estienne followed the precedent of the Aldines and tried to offer the readers the best possible version of the Greek text by amending it against old manuscripts. Even more than Manutius' associates, he employed a scientific approach to the study of the Plutarchan oeuvre, as one can infer from the title given to the thirteen volumes that formed the Plutarch series: *Plutarchou Xaironeōs ta sōzomena sungrammata. Plutarchi Chaeronensis quae extant opera, cum latina interpretatione, ex vetustis codicibus plurima nunc primum emendata sunt, ut ex Henr. Stephani adnotationibus intelleges, excudebat Henr. Stephanus*. Not only did Estienne insert variants, emendations, and annotations, made by himself or by the team of philologists who assisted him, he also provided the *Moralia* with a new system of pagination, dividing the various works into numbered chapters and each chapter into sections indicated by letters. It may be indicative of the importance attributed to Plutarch that he used this same system for Plato's works too. This also suggests that Estienne's primary interest was not merely to disseminate Plutarch's thought, but also to reconstruct it as accurately as possible.

Indeed, Estienne's work was motivated by Plutarch's distinction not only in moral philosophy but in every field of knowledge. As we can read in the

<sup>24</sup> The Froben reprint, in particular, contained numerous variants and conjectures, as noted by Aulotte (1965: 30–31) and Taufer (2013: 237–238), *pace* Ziegler (1965: 382).

<sup>25</sup> On Henri Estienne, see Considine (2008: 56–100), Grafton-Most-Settis (2010: 330–331).

preface to the first volume of the series, Plutarch's corpus deserved to be made completely available, just as that of other illustrious ancient writers:

There are three things that, when publishing an ancient author, who wants to estimate the reward for his work should preliminarily consider: the first one is whether the author is worth being published; the second whether an edition worthy of the author already exists or is desirable; the third one whether the editor himself is fit for completing the edition. Of these three features, all of the learned men agree that the first one abounds in Plutarch; about the second one, it is well known to scholars that he lacks it; about the third one, how I may have it, it is more appropriate for others to judge than for me to say ... Plutarch is universally praised as one of the most eminent authors, excellent in history, excellent in philosophy, excellent in any scientific field, extraordinary as to the result of character and virtue.

Doubtless, Estienne's monumental work contributed to cementing Plutarch's reputation as a classic of the same stature as Plato or Aristotle. At the same time, Estienne had success in establishing his series as the new canonical edition for the *Moralia* and the *Parallel lives*: as such it was reprinted several times (in 1599, 1620, and 1624). Only from the eighteenth century, still using the Geneva text as the basis for their philological work, but applying a more refined and effective ecdotic method, did scholars produce more accurate editions. One can mention the *Parallel lives* published by Augustine Bryan (Bryanus) and Moyse Du Soul (Solanus) for Tonson and Watts (London, 1723–1729), the complete edition of Plutarch's works by Johann Jacob Reiske (1716–1774) for Weidmann (Leipzig, 1774–1782), or the first critical edition of the *Moralia* by Daniel Albert Wytténbach (1746–1820) for the Clarendon Press at Oxford (1787–1803). All of these publications considerably benefited from the collation of new manuscripts and added numerous corrections to the texts; yet the Stephanus series set their foundation.

## 2 The First Printed Translations and Thomas North's *Parallel Lives*

As already stated, despite the progressive acquisition of Greek manuscripts of the *Parallel lives* and the *Moralia* from Greece and Constantinople, in the early Renaissance Plutarch was mainly known to the wider audience in translation. One should remember, in this regard, that in fourteenth and fifteenth century Western Europe ancient Greek was a foreign language that very few scholars

completely mastered and very few schools taught as part of their *curricula studiorum*, while Latin represented the lingua franca of cultured men.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the importance of the humanists' translations of Plutarch's works into Latin and the vernacular cannot be stressed enough: it was through them that Western European readers had access to Plutarch.

Considering the Latin translations, however, one can notice that the effort of the early humanists was unsystematic and the outcome could not match the expectations of the readers of later generations. For the translations, which were gradually made as long as the Greek codices became available to the European scholars, especially in Italy, concerned individual or small groups of treatises or biographies. The translators, therefore, did not usually engage with the whole corpus of the *Moralia* nor with the entire series of the *Parallel lives*.<sup>27</sup> Most importantly, despite the translators' good knowledge of Latin and Greek, and their attempt to adopt an elegant style, the Latin versions were overall too literal, so that they often resulted in a lexically and syntactically unnatural prose. This explains why most of them did not stand the test of time and were soon consigned to oblivion.<sup>28</sup>

In the sixteenth century, conversely, as we saw earlier, the way of reading Plutarch's works substantially changed thanks to the first printed editions, which collected all of the *Parallel lives* and the *Moralia*. Not only did the first printed editions make the readers fully appreciate Plutarch as an eminent philosopher and writer, they also let the *Parallel lives* and the *Moralia* be viewed and read as corpora.<sup>29</sup> As a consequence, in addition to the translations of separate parts of the Plutarchan oeuvre, which continued being issued just as in the previous centuries, various scholars and publishers also worked on transposing into Latin all of Plutarch's writings together.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, in

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<sup>26</sup> Ciccolella (2008: 75–77, 118–149) thoroughly examined the *curricula* of Renaissance schools: ancient Greek was taught as a language of culture rather than of communication, and was propaedeutic to acquiring a deeper knowledge of Latin. Cf. also Bolgar (1954: 265–393).

<sup>27</sup> In this regard, one should note that Giovanni Antonio Campano's printed edition of the *Parallel lives* in Latin for Uldaricus Gallus (1470) collected the translations already made by various Italian humanists in the previous decades, without adding new versions. So heterogeneous a compilation was repeatedly reprinted, becoming a *vulgata* of Plutarch's *Parallel lives*; see Giustiniani (1961: 4–6).

<sup>28</sup> See Becchi (2009: 37) and in this volume. On the humanists' method of translation, see also Berschin (2001: 1033), Oakley-Brown (2010), Russell (2001).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Pade (2007: I.26).

<sup>30</sup> The Latin translations of parts of the *Moralia* were issued especially in the first half of the sixteenth century; among them one should mention in particular those of Guillaume Budé (*4 opuscula*, 1505), Giovanni Corsi (*4 opuscula*, 1512–1513), Erasmus of Rotterdam

general the sixteenth century Latin versions of Plutarch were characterised by a more refined style. This implied that interpreting the Greek texts correctly was not the translators' only task: it was also important to give Plutarch's works an appropriate literary form and expression, and to render them into a suitable prose in Latin. Indeed, translating into Latin became an artistic as well as a scholarly endeavour.

Some of these 'holistic' publications, which were no longer a prerogative of the Italian humanists as in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but involved *literati* from all over Europe, rose to special prominence. For instance, extremely significant were the Latin translations of the *Parallel lives* (1561) and the *Moralia* (1570) by the German scholar Wilhelm Holtzman (also known as Guilielmus Xylander, 1532–1576, see Becchi in this volume), which were prepared not only by using the Aldine editions, but also by consulting some codices in order to emend the texts and restore Plutarch's original sense.<sup>31</sup> A large part of the translation of the *Moralia*, which was first published in Basel for Thomas Guarinus, was included in the Stephanus series of 1572, in books 7–9. That same year, all of Holtzman's Latin versions were reprinted, becoming the *vulgata* of Plutarch's *opuscula*. Other influential publications were the Latin versions of the *Moralia* (1564) and the *Parallel lives* (1573) by the Dutch humanist Hermann Cruser (latinised as Hermannus Cruserius, c. 1510–1575), which came out in Basel for Thomas Guarinus. Cruser's Latin style was markedly more sophisticated than Holtzman's: for instance, he tried to maintain Plutarch's complex, sometimes even intricate hypotaxis, rendering it into a harmonious syntactical arrangement that imitated Cicero's *concinnitas*; similarly, he did not usually simplify (as Holtzman did) Plutarch's most frequent use of hendiadys. This shows how the simple search for *ad verbum* correspondences with Plutarch's texts was a criterion no longer in use.<sup>32</sup>

Despite the different results of their work, however, both Holtzman and Cruser shared the same approach to translating: they focused on reconstructing the Greek texts, understanding their meaning, correcting the mistakes of past editors and translators, and preparing a faithful translation into a fluent and idiomatic Latin. Indeed, both tried to comply with the source texts' main

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(11 *opuscula*, 1513–1526), Othmar Nachtgall (11 *opuscula*, 1519–1529). As regards the *Parallel lives*, as recalled at n. 27, the collection of Campano continued being very popular; see Giustiniani (1961: 44–47). Similar anthologies were also put together for the *Moralia* by various publishing houses, such as Michael Isingrin (42 *opuscula*, 1541), Sebastian Greiff (58 *opuscula* in three volumes, 1542–1551), and Michel de Vascosan (45 *opuscula*, 1544); see Becchi (2009: 37–49).

<sup>31</sup> See Taufer (2013: 238–239) and Becchi in this volume.

<sup>32</sup> See Giustiniani (1961: 6–7, n. 3).

features, accommodating (each in his own way) their linguistic and stylistic choices to Plutarch's cultural authority. It is no surprise, then, that, since their versions supplemented the philological research conducted by the European scholars on Plutarch's writings, they primarily met with the approval of the cultural and academic circles.

Yet the vernacular versions of Plutarch, to some extent conceived as literary works independent from their originals, were more popular and had a more diverse readership, since they appealed to rulers, courtiers, diplomats, members of the Church, writers, historians, and so forth. Some of these translations even acquired the status of classics. That is the case of Jacques Amyot's French versions of the *Parallel lives* and the *Moralia*, which greatly inspired modern writers as much as classical scholars (see Frazier and Guerrier in this volume). Unlike other translations such as those into Italian (the so-called "volgarizzamenti") by Francesco Sansovino (1564) or by Marcello Adriani (his *Moralia* and *Parallel lives* translations remained unpublished until 1819–1820), which had very little or no echo in Italian culture, the value of Amyot's works transcended the mere transmission or reception of Plutarch's texts, as they left their mark in the history of French and European literature.<sup>33</sup>

Another illustrious publication that is worth analysing in detail is Sir Thomas North's English translation of Plutarch's *Parallel lives*.<sup>34</sup> Thomas North (1535–c. 1601) was a diplomat and an English army officer at the time of the Spanish Armada. Indeed, he was not a professional writer nor a man of letters in the strict sense. He seems to have started to pursue his interest in translating when at Lincoln's Inn he joined other lawyers who devoted themselves to such an activity. Before working on his version of Plutarch, North rendered into English Antonio de Guevara's *Reloj de príncipes o libro aureo del emperador Marco Aurelio* (1557) and an Italian anthology of eastern fables, which became *The Morall Philosophie of Doni* (1570).

Doubtless, Thomas North's masterpiece was *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes* (1579), a translation that he did not produce from Plutarch's *Parallel lives* directly, but from Amyot's *Les Vies des hommes illustres Grecs et Romains*. Besides, North had very little (if any) knowledge of Latin and ancient Greek. This released him from the task of looking for exact verbal matches and from abiding completely by the original Greek text. Conversely, following a

<sup>33</sup> On Sansovino and Adriani, see Costa (2012: 94–100).

<sup>34</sup> On North's biography, see Tucker Brooke (1909: ix–xxiv), Whibley (1909: 9–12). In general, on English literary translation in the Renaissance and the Elizabethan era, see Braden-Cummings-Gillespie (2010), Demetriou-Tomlinson (2015), Ellis (2008), Schmidt (2013).

tendency displayed by many translators of the Elizabethan era, North creatively engaged with the *Parallel lives*, giving them a decidedly dramatic dimension.<sup>35</sup>

This is particularly visible when, for instance, his English translation amplifies Amyot's more simple expressions, presents colloquialisms where Amyot employed a judicial tone, or introduces the imagery of fight where Amyot preferred a more gentle and neutral tone. In general, North usually added picturesque effects to the narrative by choosing emphatic terms and by inventing powerful words and metaphors. At the same time, he always maintained the musical rhythm and the harmony of the sentences, which already characterised Amyot's version. An example can be found in the *Life of Themistocles*. At *Them.* 8.1, Plutarch discusses the importance of the Battle of Artemisium, claiming that the Greeks learned neither to fear the barbarians' great number of ships nor to lose control when hearing their boastful shouts and hymns. Plutarch, then, adds that courageous fighters "should despise such things, rush against the enemy, and grapple with them, fighting it out to the bitter end" (*dei tōn toioutōn kataphronountas ep'auta ta sōmata pheresthai kai pros ekeina diagōnizesthai symplakentas*). Amyot elegantly translated this passage: "Il ne fault point faire de compte de tout cela, ains aller droit affronter les hōmes et s'attacher hardiment à eux". North rendered the same text much more vividly: "They should make no reckoning of all that bravery and brags, but should stick to it like men, and lay it on the jacks of them".

In reinterpreting Amyot and Plutarch, North also went so far as to insert in the narrative invented details that were not in the French and the Greek texts: the result was to increase the theatrical flair of the scenes described. A typical example is Coriolanus' return at Actium (*Cor.* 23.1–2), an episode that is often recalled by modern scholars, because Shakespeare chose it as the *incipit* of his *Coriolanus* (see Dimitrova in this volume). North closely followed Amyot and narrated how Coriolanus, without being recognised by anyone, went straight to Aufidius' house. There he sat down without saying a word. About the people inside the house, North wrote "They of the house spying him", implying an attitude that is neither in Amyot's translation ("de quoy ceux de la maison") nor in Plutarch's original ("hoi kata tēn oikian"). Similarly, where Plutarch and Amyot wrote that the servants did not dare ask Coriolanus anything because of the sense of majesty that transpired from him, North expanded again on the depiction of Coriolanus' figure: "Ill-favouredly muffled up and disguised as he was", an image that is repeated at the end of the scene too ("the straunge disguising of this man"). These creative additions, which establish a strong connection

<sup>35</sup> See Gillespie (2011: 20–22), Greengrass (2016), Tucker Brooke (1909: xv–xvii).

between the appearance and the moral behaviour of Coriolanus, highlight the sense of estrangement between Coriolanus and his hometown.

As is proven by the passages examined above, contrary to the Latin translations, North leaned on accommodating Amyot's version to the creation of a "new" text, which the English noble readers of the Elizabethan era could be pleased about, perceiving it as useful for their lives, since it reflected their ideals and expectations regarding the ancient and the modern world. As North clarified both in the dedication to Queen Elizabeth and in the letter to the reader, Plutarch's *Parallel lives* offered many examples of virtue and vice, from which the modern audience could learn. According to North, that is, the moral lessons drawn from the Plutarchan heroes' cases also applied to the modern age, especially in respect to the preference for an active life in politics and to the obsequious obedience to the legitimate power of the rulers.<sup>36</sup> We read in the dedication *To the most high and mighty Princess Elizabeth*:

Then well may the readers think, if they have done this for heathen Kings, what should we do for Christian Princes? If they have done this for glory, what should we do for religion? If they have done this without hope of heaven, what should we do that look for immortality? And so adding the encouragement of these examples, to the forwardness of their own dispositions: what service is there in war, what honour in peace, which they will not be ready to do, for their worthy Queen?

In this respect, especially the sections of the *Lives* where Plutarch addresses political topics must have been inspiring to North's audience. For example, in the formal *synkrisis* of the pair *Theseus* and *Romulus* Plutarch claims that neither of the heroes maintained the true character of a king (*tōn basilikōn tropōn*), Theseus displaying democratic tendencies (*metebale metabolēn dēmotikēn*), Romulus becoming inclined to tyranny (*tyrannikēn*). Plutarch also adds that, first and foremost, the ruler (*archōn*) should preserve his power (*tēn archēn*) and whoever remits or extends his authority may no longer be regarded as a king or a ruler, but becomes either a demagogue (*dēmagōgos*) or a despot (*dēspotēs*) (*Comp. Thes. et Rom.* 31(2).1–2). North, following Amyot, translated *archōn* as "prince"; significantly, however, in his version *dēmagōgos* was rendered as "people-pleaser" and *dēspotēs* as "cruel tyrant", while Amyot employed the more neutral terms "populaire flateur" and "maistre superbe". Indeed, it is plausible to assume that this word selection helped the readers ponder the need for the monarch's moderation and restraint in exerting absolute power as

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<sup>36</sup> See Denton (1994: 64–66).

much as for a just government of the realm, a theme that may have appealed to Queen Elizabeth I and many of her counselors at court as it bore a crucial relevance to shaping the image of the ideal prince in the Elizabethan era.<sup>37</sup>

North's view on the *Parallel lives* also entailed a predilection for Plutarch's ethical teachings over his scientific, theological, or metaphysical analyses, even at the cost of simplifying the translation. Take the case of Plutarch's programmatic statement in the prologue to the *Life of Demetrius*. Here Plutarch explains his decision of inserting the biographies of some negative characters into the series of the *Parallel lives* through a comparison with the arts and bodily senses: through the arts and the senses one can apprehend opposites. Yet, as Plutarch continues, unlike the arts "sense-perception has no greater facility in distinguishing white objects than black, or sweet things than bitter, or soft and yielding substances than hard and resisting ones, but its function is to receive impressions from all objects alike" (*he men gar aisthēsis ouden ti mallon epi leukōn hē melanōn diagnōsei gegonen, oude glukeōn hē pikrōn, oude malakōn hē eikontōn hē sklērōn kai antitupōn, all'ergon autēs hekastois entunchanousan hupo pantōn*) (*Demetr.* 1.2). Amyot accurately translated this passage: "Car le sens est une puissance naturelle de discerner et cognoistre autant le blanc comme le noir, et non plus le doulx que l'amer, ou le mal et enfondrant comme le dur et le ferme: ains est seulement son propre quand telles choses, qui sont les objects naturelz, luy sont presentées". North does not seem to have been interested in this philosophical enquiry nor could he grasp its subtle details. Thus he simply wrote: "The senses receive indifferently, without discretion and judgement, white and black, sweet and sour, soft and hard: for their office is only to admit their several objects". One may reasonably think that this kind of editorial interventions aimed at sparing North's readers too complex philosophical details in order to concentrate on moral behaviour, the real focus of the readers' attention.

Indeed, the idea that the historical and moral teachings contained in the *Parallel lives* could be absorbed by the moderns, who could find there an answer to their ethical and political concerns, led to the 'appropriation' and domestication of Amyot's (and Plutarch's) text. In order to be imitated, that is, Plutarch's and Amyot's great men and their value system had to be 'adapted' and actualised through the translator's mediation. As Denton noticed, for instance, in the *Life of Coriolanus* the ancient Roman fight was replaced by

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<sup>37</sup> On Elizabeth I's government based on restraint and her image as a model prince and the antithesis of a tyrant, see Doran (2013: 1–13), Shenk (2010: 1–15). More on Elizabeth I's politics and the political advice literature of her time in Butler (2013), Dean (1996: 63–96), Jones (2013) McLaren (1999: 1–74 and 134–197).

the sport of fencing, popular in Elizabethan England (*Cor.* 11); similarly, at *Cor.* 32 the priests negotiating with Coriolanus were translated as “bishoppes”, which reminded of the Christian bishops, certainly more familiar.<sup>38</sup> The same term is employed to translate Caesar’s appointment as *pontifex maximus* at *Caes.* 7.1–4: “At that time the chief bishop Metellus died”; “Mother, this day thou shalt see thy son chief bishop of Rome, or banished from Rome” (Amyot chose the term “Pontife”).

Another similar case of North’s adaptation of Amyot’s translation can be found in the prologue to the *Life of Pericles*, where Plutarch examines the philosophical topic of admiring and emulating virtuous deeds regardless of their doers (*Per.* 1.4–5). Here we can read: “Oftentimes, when we like the work, we mislike the workman, as commonly in making these perfumes and purple colours. For both the one and the other do please us well: but yet we take perfumers and dyers to be men of mean occupation”. Plutarch’s text, in fact, reads “illiberal and mechanical” (*aneleutherous kai banausous*), which Amyot rendered as “viles et mechaniques”. North, that is, despite emphasising the social distance from artisans, seems to have reduced the stigma attached to craftsmanship in the ancient world as much as in sixteenth-century France.<sup>39</sup>

Thanks to his interventions and cultural transpositions *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes* were favourably received, as is demonstrated by the fact that North released two further editions of his translation in 1595 and 1603. Furthermore, as is well known, North even inspired Shakespeare to write some of his most memorable plays. In fact, *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Antony and Cleopatra* can be considered dramatisations of North’s texts: there too the ancient world and the Elizabethan society found an extraordinary synthesis.<sup>40</sup>

To conclude, in the Renaissance the reception of Plutarch appears to have taken two different paths. On the one hand, the printed editions of Plutarch’s Greek texts as much as their Latin translations aimed at reconstructing as faithfully as possible the original works. On the other hand, the vernacular translations adapted the Greek originals to the demands of the modern readers. In both cases, nonetheless, Plutarch was rediscovered as an illustrious philosopher and a classic, whose writings transmitted precious moral teachings from antiquity. This conferred on him a prestige that remained intact in the following centuries.

<sup>38</sup> Denton (2016: 50–51).

<sup>39</sup> On the image of craftsmen in Elizabethan society, see Stevenson (1984: 161–213).

<sup>40</sup> On Shakespeare and Plutarch, see Billault (2002), Denton (2016: 53–63), Gillespie (2011: 47–59), Pelling (2002: 387–411, 2011: 64–76).

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## Humanist Latin Translations of the *Moralia*

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The eclipse of Plutarch's works in the West began in the fifth century and endured until the first humanist revival. The Medieval world knew the *Moralia* via two codices: one in the Calabro-Sicilian area (which became Vind. Phil. graec. 129), comprising the first 21 writings of the *Moralia*, the other in Padua (Ambros. C 126 inf., the exemplar of the *recensio planudea*), which was copied between 1294 and 1295 and transmits *Moralia* 1–69.<sup>1</sup> These, however, had only very limited exposure and influence, as the general lack of interest on the part of Western scholars of the time shows.

The true rediscovery of Plutarch unfolds between the end of the fourteenth century and the first half of the fifteenth century, years which saw the appearance of the first Latin translations of the *Moralia*,<sup>2</sup> which, together with the *Lives*,<sup>3</sup> enjoyed extraordinary favour in Italy. The explanation for such popularity lies in the historical, political and, above all, cultural conditions that encouraged the universally recognised encounter with Greek culture in the West. These translations represent one of the main features that distinguish their time from the Middle Ages, but are also a significant testimony to a collective undertaking on the humanists' part, as well as an important factor in the cultural development of the Renaissance.<sup>4</sup> The works of Plutarch were in fact made accessible in Latin through an effort that went on almost uninterruptedly for more than two centuries, up to the emergence of translations into various vulgar tongues.<sup>5</sup>

The reasons for this popularity are to be found above all in the cultural fluorescence that characterised the early *Quattrocento* and that witnessed the inception of a new culture and the emergence of a new ideal of humanity: as the humanists were seeking to construct a new form of civic, political and cultural life centred around Man, they discerned in Plutarch a very effective source

<sup>1</sup> Sabbadini (1915: 43–50 ff.); Manfredini (1987); Garzya (1998: 15–17).

<sup>2</sup> Resta (1962: 13–14); Aulotte (1965: 321–342); Weiss (1977: 204–226); Gualdo (1985: 178 ff.); Bevegni (1994: 71–84); Stok (1998: 117–36); Cesarin Martinelli (2000: 5–33); Becchi (2009: 10–52).

<sup>3</sup> Pade (1995: 169–183; 1998: 101–116).

<sup>4</sup> Garin (1966; 1967: 19–33).

<sup>5</sup> Cortesi-Fiaschi (2008: II 1302–1307, 1366–1371, 1528–1533).

of guidance pertaining to the consideration of ethical matters. The rebirth of Plutarch thus embraced not only the *Lives*, with their paradigmatic ethical models, but also the *Moralia*, whose polymathy seemed to resonate with the most fervent and urgent aspirations of the humanist movement and its culture. Indeed, it is Plutarch the philosopher who may rightfully be counted among Humanism's most distinctive and momentous discoveries and acquisitions, having provided a model not only in formal and stylistic matters but also in ethical and philosophical considerations. The humanists saw Plutarch's ethics as a philosophy not of theory, one of words and syllogisms, but of practice, of the art of living: a philosophy that aims to prevent and cure the worst maladies of the soul, namely, those that penetrate from without because of a weakness (*astheneia – atonia*) due to ignorance (*anoia*) and lack of education (*apaideusia*). Like Plutarch, the humanists were convinced that moderation and gentleness, wherein above all resides the virtue of the political man, are the fruits of reason and education that equip one to weather adverse events in serenity (Plu., *Cor.* 15.4; 21.1).

The first Western translation into Latin of a piece of Plutarch's writing from the so-called *Moralia* dates to the second half of the fourteenth century, when that of his *On the control of anger* was made at the Curia of Avignon.<sup>6</sup> This cultural centre, renowned for its pontifical library, which housed a good number of Greek codices, is where in years immediately prior to the death of Petrarch a characteristically medieval rendering (*De furoris ireque abstinentia*) was penned by a Byzantine Greek prelate, Simone Atumano, on the occasion of a visit to the pontifical Curia. The translation in question, commissioned by Cardinal Piero Corsini, former Bishop of Volterra now of Florence, came into the hands of the Florentine chancellor Coluccio Salutati, whose interest in and attention to Plutarch could be due either to the texts themselves as they became available in Latin translations or, more directly, to the earliest influence of the Byzantine school in Italy.<sup>7</sup> This distinguished humanist in the mould of Petrarch branded this version as obscure and barbarous and, though Greekless, corrected its Latin, which he considered entirely inadequate (*De remediis irae*). Yet, a semi-Greek translation (Salutati, *Ep.* 8.23: *semigreca translatio*) though it was, Atumano's word for word translation (*verbum de verbo*), according to medieval scholastic practice, was that which introduced Plutarch as a philosopher to Western literature, thus opening a new era in his study.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Di Stefano (1968: 14–19 ff.).

<sup>7</sup> Fedalto (1968).

<sup>8</sup> Berschin (1989: 7).

Plutarch's rediscovery in the West happened to coincide almost exactly with the beginning of the Renaissance, the arrival in Florence on 2 February of 1397 of Manuel Chrysoloras, "a man who was most expert in Greek letters" (*vir ... litterarum graecarum peritissimus*), who held the chair in Greek in the *Studio fiorentino* until 1400, thus equipping his students, for the first time in the West, with more than a superficial knowledge of Greek.<sup>9</sup> It was at that time – thanks again to the mediation of Salutati – that a search began in the East, at Constantinople, for codices of Plutarch that would be fundamental to the first dissemination of the *Moralia*-translations from the Greek.<sup>10</sup>

After the pre-humanist Atumano-Salutati version, the Latin translations from the *Moralia* that circulated in the first half of the fifteenth century bore the imprint of Chrysoloras' school and teachings; of his school because the Florentine humanists of the first generation were Chrysoloras' pupils, many of whom took his place as teachers of Greek at the *Studio fiorentino*; of his teachings because they applied his methodology in their translations. Chrysoloras' method thus became standard practice even beyond the Florentine sphere, being applied not only at the *Studio fiorentino* but also in such other leading centres as the *Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana*, whose influence extended to the humanists Bartolomeo Sacchi, known as *il Platina*, Niccolò Perotti and Giovanni Lorenzi.

Chrysoloras had taught an innovative and revolutionary method of translation that shifted concern from the meaning of individual words to the overall meaning of sentences while holding to the *graeca proprietas*, that is, exactitude in rendering the original text without interpretive or rhetorical augmentation. This new practice, rendering the sense of text (*ad sententiam trasferre*), which broke with the mechanical *transferre verbum de verbo* of medieval scholasticism was itself expressed with a new verb, *traducere*, coined by Bruni and then routinely used by the humanists. As a corrected technique of reading, this *traducere ad sententiam* was distinctive in its faithfulness to the Greek text but also in its avoidance of reversion to mechanical word-by-word translation.<sup>11</sup> This was neither a free nor an arbitrary method. One might, indeed, state that the distinctive characteristic of Latin translations of Plutarch's philosophy in the first half of the fifteenth century is a generally close lexical and syntactical correspondence to the Greek original that left little room for stylistic or formal considerations. This literalness, which is still felt to be excessive, together with

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<sup>9</sup> Di Stefano (1963: 1–16; 1968: 14–19).

<sup>10</sup> Wilson (1992: 1–4); Pade (2014: 531–543).

<sup>11</sup> Sabbadini (1920).

a Latin prose lacking in elegance, was perhaps the reason these translations were not always positively received.

The first generation of these humanists begins with Jacopo Angeli da Scarperia, the first humanists translator of Plutarch,<sup>12</sup> who, between 1405 and 1409, in Rome, where he held the post of *scriptor apostolicus*, translated two antiquarian texts, the *On the fortune and virtue of Alexander the Great* and the *On the fortune of the Romans*.<sup>13</sup> Angeli was followed by the Arretine Leonardo Bruni who, after coming to teach Greek at the *Studio*, translated the *On progress in virtue* and the *Greek questions*, and by Guarino Guarini, known as Guarino Veronese, Chrysoloras' most devoted pupil, called to Florence to replace his master in the chair of Greek. Guarino, who was the most prolific early fifteenth-century translator of Plutarch, translated, in Florence, the pseudo-Plutarchan *On the education of children* (*De liberorum educatione*) which played a vital role in the dissemination of the set of pedagogical principles that were to guide the education of the new man and thus bring about the institution of good government. He subsequently, in 1424, translated the pseudo-Plutarchan *Minor parallels* (*Parallela minora seu De brevibus clarorum hominum inter se contentionibus*) and, after preparing a free compendium of the *On friends and flatterers* (*De differentia veri amici et adulatoris/De assentatoris et amici differentia*), between 1437 and 1439 in Ferrara translated, though only partially, the *Roman questions*. Also traceable to the Florentine milieu are: the translation of *To an uneducated ruler* (*Quod principem deceat*) made in 1424 by Rinuccio Aretino, who was the Greek teacher of Lorenzo Valla;<sup>14</sup> those of *On virtue and vice* and of *The affections of the soul* by Cencio de' Rustici (Cincius Romanus), a pupil of Chrysoloras who, like Angeli, came to the pontifical chancellery; those of the *Symposium of the seven sages* and the *To an uneducated ruler* made between 1440 and 1443 by Giovanni Aurispa, who had been called in 1425 to the *Studio* as a professor of Greek; and those of Francesco Filelfo, who, after his arrival in Florence in April of 1429 to begin teaching as the successor to Aurispa, in 1437 translated the *Sayings of kings and commanders* (*Apophthegmata ad Traianum*) and in 1453 and 1454 the *Spartan sayings*, which were published in Venice in 1471 at the press of Vindelinus de Spira.<sup>15</sup> These humanists associated with Florence also included the Sicilian Antonio Cassarino (Noto 1390–95 – Genoa 1447), one of the few who concerned themselves exclusively with the *Moralia*. From this humanist and great lover of Plutarch, who was

<sup>12</sup> Stok (2009).

<sup>13</sup> Cesarin Martinelli (2000).

<sup>14</sup> Lockwood (1913).

<sup>15</sup> Stok (2013: 93).

active in Genoa, translations of nine essays, produced between 1439 and 1447, have come down to us: *On friends and flatterers* (*Quomodo amicus ab adulatore possit cognosci/ Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur/De discernendo amico ab adulatore*), *On inoffensive self-praise* (*Quomodo quis se laudare possit*), *Gryllus* (*Quod bruta ratione non careant*), *How to profit from your enemies* (*De utilitate quae habetur ex inimicis*), *On the control of anger* (*De ira moderanda*), *Symposium of the seven sages*, *Sayings of kings and commanders*, *Spartan sayings*, and *On the love of wealth*.<sup>16</sup>

The second half of the century sees an intensification of this tendency, with predominant interest shifting from Plutarch's *Lives* to his ethical-philosophical writings, an interest favoured by the wider availability of Plutarchan codices and the proliferation of new schools of Greek, in Rome, Venice, Padua, Mantua and Ferrara, where such humanists as Filelfo and Guarino taught and whose pupils included Vittorino da Feltre, Niccolò Perotti, Giano Pannonio and Gian Pietro da Lucca.

From the area of Florence comes a set of translations made around 1463–1465 by Alamanno Rinuccini (1426–1499),<sup>17</sup> a prominent man of letters and political figure in the Florence of Cosimo and of Lorenzo de' Medici, trained at the school of Argyropoulos and a teacher at the *Studio Fiorentino*: the *Consolation to Apollonius* (*Consolatio ad Apollonium de morte filii*) dated to 1463, but also, again from the *Moralia*, the *Virtues of women* (*De claris mulieribus*) in 1464, printed in Brescia in 1485 at the press of Boninus de Boninis and the *Lives of the ten orators*; that by Pellegrino Agli, poet and fellow philosopher of Ficino, who translated the pseudo-Plutarchan *Life of Homer*. Between 1478 and 1479, when Poliziano was the tutor of Piero de' Medici, Giovanbattista Buoninsegni (1453–after 1512), a friend of Lorenzo de' Medici and highly esteemed by his contemporaries for his knowledge of Greek, translated *On progress in virtue* (*De agnitione profectus in virtute*) and, some years later, *On friends and flatterers* (*De dignoscendo amico ab adulatore*). Two anonymous translations, from codices written by the same hand, may be plausibly attributed to Buoninsegni, one of *How to profit from your enemies* (*De commoditatibus inimicitiarum*), the other of *On envy and hatred* (*De differentia odii et invidiae*), which is distinct from the better-known version by Perotti.<sup>18</sup> Finally, Angelo Poliziano's translation of the *Love stories* must belong to the time of his sojourn in Fiesole

<sup>16</sup> Resta (1959; 1978).

<sup>17</sup> Giustiniani (1965: 163–166).

<sup>18</sup> Kristeller (1972).

in 1479.<sup>19</sup> It seems that the following year brought a series of *excerpta* from the *Moralia* paraphrased in Latin (see Ms. II 1 99 BNC Firenze).

Very prolific in Rome was the Venetian Giovanni Lorenzi (c. 1440–c. 1501), an expert Hellenist and a Vatican librarian from 1485 on, who translated nine pieces from the *Moralia*: *Advice on health* (*De tuenda bona valetudine*) and *On friends and flatterers* (*Quomodo ab adulatore discernatur amicus*), both published in Rome in 1514 at the press of Jacopo Mazzocchi; *On talkativeness* (*De nugacitate*) and *On curiosity*, also printed in Rome, in 1523 and 1524, respectively; and *How to profit from your enemies*, *On the control of anger*, *Political precepts*, *On inoffensive self-praise* (*De se ipsum citra invidiam laudando*) and *On Isis and Osiris*. Between 1464 and 1471 at the pontifical court the Milanese Lampugnino Birago (end of fourteenth century – 1472), a friend of Pier Candido Decembrio and a pupil of Filelfo, translated five essays of Plutarch: *On inoffensive self-praise* (*Se ipsum laudandum sine invidia audientium*), *Gryllus* (*An utantur ratione irrationalia*), *On friends and flatterers* (*Quodammodo discernat aliquis ab amico adulatorem*), *On the control of anger* (*De cavenda iracundia*) and *Spartan sayings*.<sup>20</sup> Between the first and second halves of the fifteenth century young Niccolò Perotti, to whom, it seems, a translation of *On envy and hatred* (*Libellus de differentia inter odium et invidiam*) is also to be ascribed, with no author noted and a dedication to Pope Nicholas V, translated, probably at the suggestion of Cardinal Bessarion, the *Symposium of the seven sages* and *On the fortune and virtue of Alexander the Great*,<sup>21</sup> also dedicated to Nicholas V. He was also commissioned a translation of *On the fortune of the Romans*, which he worked on after 1451. Between 1472 and 1473 Bartolomeo Sacchi, known as *il Platina*, (1421–1481), translated *On the control of anger* (*De ira sedanda*).

From Venice and Padua come the translations by the Hungarian Giano Pannonio, who studied in Ferrara under Guarino Veronese and translated in Padua, between 1456 and 1457, *How to profit from your enemies* (*Quibus modis ab inimicis iuvari possimus/De utilitate quae habetur ab inimicis*) and *On curiosity* (*De nimia curiositate/De negotiositate*) and in 1467 the *Sayings of kings and commanders*, as one learns from the dated dedication to Mattia Corvino; by Gian Pietro Vitali d'Avenza, more commonly known as Gian Pietro da Lucca (Iohannes Petrus Lucensis), a student of Vittorino da Feltre, who translated between 1472 and 1473 the *Greek questions* and the *Roman questions* (*Problémata*), both printed in Venice in 1477 at the press of Dominicus de Siliprandis;<sup>22</sup> those

<sup>19</sup> Malta (2004).

<sup>20</sup> Miglio (1968).

<sup>21</sup> D'Angelo (1994).

<sup>22</sup> Cortesi (2015).

of the *Gryllus (An brutis ratio insit)* by Giovanni Regio (1440–1520), published in Padua in the first months of 1488 under the title *An brutis ratio insit*, as well as of the *Sayings of kings and commanders (Apophthegmata)* and, in 1507, of the *Spartan sayings (Apophthegmata Lacaenarum)* by his brother Raffaele; those by the publisher Bergamasque Giovanni Calfurnio (Giovanni Perlanza de' Ruffinoni da Bordogna, 1443–1503), who published his translation of *On listening to lectures (De modo audiendi)*, in 1505 at Venice, at the press of Bernardino de' Vitali; and those by the Paduan Lodovico Odasi (1455–1509),<sup>23</sup> who in 1486 translated *On friends and flatterers (Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur)*, published in Venice by Paganino Paganini in 1489, *How to profit from your enemies (Quo pacto quispiam ab inimicis emolumentum capere possit)* and *On envy and hatred*. Nicola Sagundino (1402–64) and Theodore of Gaza (c. 1415–1475), two Greeks who emigrated to Italy at the twilight of the Byzantine Empire, also published translations of *Moralia* texts. The former, who played an important part in Venetian politics in the middle decades of the *Quattrocento*, published a translation of the *Political precepts (Praecepta civilia/Politicorum opus seu de civili institutione ad Traianum imperatorem)* in Brescia in 1485, at the press of Jacopo Britannico. The latter, a colleague of Vittorino da Feltre in the teaching of Greek, published between August of 1471 and 1472, in the first year of the pontificate of Sixtus IV, the *On the fact that the philosopher ought most of all to converse with leaders (Maxime cum principibus philosopho esse disserendum/De familiaritate philosopho ineunda cum principe)*.<sup>24</sup> Then, at the close of the century the Brescian Carlo Valgilio (1440–1498), a secretary to Cesare Borgia and an illustrious musicologist, translated *On moral virtue (De virtute morum)*, the *Advice on marriage (Praecepta connubialia)*, printed in 1497 in Brescia, the *Political precepts (Praecepta civilia)* and the *On music*, a text considered as pseudo-Plutarchan by Erasmus and by Amyot long before it was by Wilamowitz, and of which Marsilio Ficino had translated some excerpts. Finally, in the area of Milan, again near the end of the century, Giovanni Volta, whose family came from Pavia, translated the *Advice on marriage*. This translation, preserved in cod. Trivulz. 642 (H173), is dedicated to a powerful government official at the court of Ludovico il Moro, Bartolomeo Calcoda Vigevano.

Immediately following the publication in Venice in 1509 of the *editio princeps* of the *Moralia* edited by the Cretan Demetrio Ducas with the assistance of Erasmus at the press of Aldus Manutius, Renaissance culture spreads to Europe beyond the Alps and with it comes this new and revolutionary practice of translating the *Moralia*. There is certainly no lack in the first half of

<sup>23</sup> Pineti-Odazi (1896: 370).

<sup>24</sup> Bevegni (1993); Bianca (1999).

the sixteenth century of Italian translators of the *Moralia*: thus, Domenico Bonomino (d. 1516) translated the *Gryllus* (*Quod bruta animalia ratione utuntur*), printed in Brescia in 1503 by the publisher Angelo Britannico; the Abruzzese Andrea Matteo Acquaviva d'Aragona (1458–1529) translated in 1509 the *On moral virtue* (*De virtute morum*), which was only printed in Naples in 1526, at the press of Antonio Frezza da Corinaldo (Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome).<sup>25</sup> Further, Giovanni Corsi (1472–1547), a Florentine statesman, translated four essays between 1512 and 1513: *Whether virtue can be taught* (*Quod virtus per disciplinam parabilis*), *On living unknown* (*An recte dictum "Dum vivis late"*), *On the generation of the soul in the Timaeus* (*In Timaeo de animae generatione*), *How to profit from your enemies* (*Quomodo quis possit iuvari ab inimicis*); Giulio Cornelio Eugubino translated *On inoffensive self-praise* (*Quomodo aliquis sese laudari sine invidia possit*); Ascanio Censorio degli Ortensi translated *On fortune* (*De fortuna*); the philologist Stefano Negri (Stephanus Niger, c. 1475–1540), a student of Demetrios Chalcondyles and a professor of Greek at the Milanese Studio, translated the *Consolation to Apollonius* and a summary (*aemulatio*) of *On brotherly love* (*De fraterna benevolentia*); towards the end of the century (1495) Pirro Vizzani, a Hellenist in Bologna, translated *How to profit from your enemies* (*De commodis inimicitiae*); finally, in 1516 the Paduan Angelo Barbato translated *On exile*, published in Rome at the press of Giacomo Mazzocchi and the Veronese Ludovico Nogarola, one of the favourite disciples of Pietro Pomponazzi, who in 1550 translated the *Platonic questions*, with a dedication to Julius III. Yet despite this activity, Italy gradually ceased to function as the centre that fostered these translations.

The new technique of translating the *Moralia* soon spread from Italy to the rest of Europe, where illustrious intellectuals contributed to a flowering of new translations proposing that the translations by the humanists, which had not always been well received and at times criticised, be replaced with new versions aiming not only to correctly interpret the Greek text but also to give it a worthy Latin formulation. In the Netherlands, precisely at the outset of the sixteenth century, there emerges the figure of the eminent humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam (1469–1536), whose writings exhibit a nearly complete knowledge of Plutarch's works. His Latin translations of the *Moralia*, published in Basel by Johannes Froben between 1513 and 1526 render eleven writings in full: *To an uneducated ruler* (*In principe requiri doctrinam*), *On the fact that the philosopher ought most of all to converse with leaders* (*Cum principibus maxime philosophum debere disputare*), *Ills of the body and ills of the mind* (*Utrum graviores sint animi morbi quam corporis*), *How to profit from your enemies* (*Quo pacto*

25 Tateo (1991).

*quis efficiat ut ex inimicis capiat utilitatem), Advice on health (De tuenda bona valetudine praecepta), On living unknown (Num recte dictum sit λάθε βιώσας, id est, sic vive ut nemo te sentiat vixisse), On the love of wealth, On friends and flatterers (Quo pacto quis dignoscere possit adulatorem ab amico/De differentia adulatori et amici), On compliancy (De vitiosa verecundia), On the control of anger (De cohibenda iracundia/De non irascendo), On curiosity; Sayings of kings and commanders (adaptation).* In addition to Erasmus, Dutch translators worthy of mention are Gilbert de Longueil (Gybertus Longolius 1507–1543) who translated the *Natural questions* (*De causis naturalibus*), *Platonic questions*, *Which is more useful, fire or water?*, *On monarchy, democracy and oligarchy* (*De tribus rei publicae generibus, monarchia, democratia, aristocratia: hoc est regia, populari et paucorum potestate*), *Whether old men should engage in public affairs, On envy and hatred* (*De odio et invidia*); Adriaan de Ionghe (Adrianus Junius, 1511–1575), who in 1547 translated the *Table talk* (*Excerpta ex libris I–VIII*); Johann Otho (Johannes Hoste 1520–1581), who translated *On the education of children* (*De puerorum institutione*), *On having many friends*, (*De complurium amicitia*, 1556), *On the eating of meat* (1556); and Pietersz Sjoerd (Petrus Suffridus 1527–1597) who translated *On the eating of meat* (1564).

Belgians worth remembering are Christophe de Longueil (Christophorus Longolius 1490–1522), who translated the *How to profit from your enemies* and Pieter Platevoet (Petrus Plancius, 1552–1622), who in Amsterdam translated the *Symposium of the seven sages*.

The British scholars include the high prelate and man of letters Richard Pace (Richardus Paceus, 1482?–1536), who was in close contact with Erasmus and between 1511 and 1522 translated four essays: *On talkativeness, On the love of wealth* (*De avaritia*), *How to profit from your enemies* (*Quomodo poterit quis ab inimicis aliquid commodi reportare*), and *On listening to lectures* (*De modo audiendi*), which were published in Venice in 1522 at the press of Bernardino de' Vitali; John Cheke (1514–1557), a professor of Greek at the University of Cambridge, who translated *On superstition*, and the Scotsman Edward Henryson (Eduardus Henriso, 1579), who between 1551 and 1555 translated the *Symposium of the seven sages* and *On Stoic contradictions*.

In Germany we note Johann Caesarius (Ianus Caesarius 1468–1550), who translated *On compliancy* (*De immoderata verecundia*), published in 1565; Joachim Kammermeister (Camerarius 1500–1574), who taught Greek at Nuremberg and at Leipzig and translated *Whether virtue can be taught* and *On moral virtue*; Willibald Pirckheymer (1470–1530), a native of Nuremberg, who translated *On god's slowness to punish* (*De iis qui sero a numine corripiuntur*) in 1513, and, ten years later, *On the control of anger, On curiosity, On the love of wealth* (*De avaritia*), *That we ought not to borrow* (*De vitanda usura vel Quod*

*non oporteat foenerari); Ottmar Nachtigall (Ottomarus Luscinius, Strasbourg 1478/80–Freiburg 1537), who in 1519 translated the first *quaestio* from the *Table talk* (*Num in convivio philosophandi sit locus*), and, from 1522 to 1529, nine more essays: *Whether virtue can be taught* (*De eo quod docenda sit virtus*), *Is vice a sufficient cause of misery?* (*An improbitas sufficiat ad pariendam homini infelicitatem*), *On listening to lectures* (*De auditoris officio*), *On fortune*, *On virtue and vice*, *On having many friends* (*De amicitia in multos diffusa*), *On reading the poets* (*Quatenus aut quo fructu liceat iuveni audire poeticam vel De fugiendis et sequendis in poetica*), the pseudo-Plutarchan *Consolation to Apollonius* (*Paramythecus insignis ad Apollonium super mortem filii*) and *On progress in virtue* (*Quo pacto se quispiam circa virtutem, candoremque morum sentiat proficisse*); Simon Gryner (Simon Grynaeus 1493–1541), a professor of Greek at the University of Heidelberg (1529–1532), who in 1534 translated the most important of Plutarch's works on animal psychology: namely, the *Gryllus* (*Sitne rationis aliqua in bestiis vis*) and *On the intelligence of animals* (*Terrestriane an aquatilia animalia sint callidiora vel De industria animalium*); the humanist, reformer and close friend of Martin Luther Philipp Schwarzerd (Philippus Melanchton, 1497–1560), who translated from the eighth book of the *Table talk* (*Quaestio 7: On the Pythagorean precepts/De nota Pythagorica*); Johann Haynpol (Janus Cornarius, 1500–1558) who, besides the brief rhetorical essay *Which is more useful, fire or water?* (*Utrum aqua an ignis utilior existat*) translated the *Table talk* in 1534 and, in 1556, two scientific texts on philosophy addressed to the Stoics, namely, *On Stoic contradictions* (*De stoicis contrarietatibus*) and *Stoic paradoxes are stranger than poets'*; Thomas Kirchmeyer (Thomas Naogeorgus 1508/9–1563), who translated six essays: *On tranquillity of mind* (1555), *On superstition* (1556), *On brotherly love* (1556), *On talkativeness*, *On inoffensive self-praise*, *On the sign of Socrates*, *Symposium of the seven sages* (1556); and, finally, the Hellenist and humanist Johannes Kessel (Johannes Caselius, 1533–1613), who at the end of the century translated *On curiosity*.*

In French lands we note the Parisian humanist Guillaume Budé (Guilielmus Budaeus, 1468–1540), who translated, between 1502 and 1505, four essays: *On the fortune of the Romans*, *On the fortune and virtue of Alexander the Great* (*De fortuna vel virtute Alexandri*), *On tranquillity of mind* (*De tranquillitate et securitate animi*), and *Doctrines of the philosophers* (*De placitis decretisque philosophorum naturalibus libri V*); Jean Lodé, a native of Nantes and the director of a college in Orléans, produced a translation of the *Advice on marriage* (*Nuptialia praecepta*), which appeared in Paris in 1510; Adrien Turnèbe (Adrianus Turnebus, 1512–1565) translated five essays: *On the obsolescence of oracles*, *On the first cold*, *On the generation of the soul in the Timaeus*, *On fate*, and *Symposium of the seven sages*; Louis Rousard (d. 1567) translated three essays:

*On brotherly love (de amicitia fraterna)*, *On talkativeness (De nugacitate, 1554)*, and *On the eating of meat (1554)*; Arnould Le/de Ferron (Arnoldus Ferronus, 1515–1563), who around 1555 translated the two most important of Plutarch's anti-Epicurean writings: *Against Colotes (Liber contra Coloten)* and *It is not possible even to live pleasantly according to Epicurus (Quo id suscipitur probandum, ne vivere quidem iucunde quenquam posse, qui sectam sequatur Epicuri)* and in 1557 the *Dialogue on love*; Robert Breton (Robertus Britannus) who in 1544 translated the *Consolation to my wife* and the *Lives of the ten orators*; Guillaume Plançon (Gulielmus Plantius vel Plancius d. 1568), who in 1552 translated *On superstition*; Denis Lambin (1520–1572), a professor of Greek at the Collège de France, who in 1554 translated part of the *Dialogue on love* (excerpts), and Gentian Hervet (1499–1584), a great expert in classical languages who, in 1536, translated *On reading the poets*.

Even before the publication of the complete text of the *Moralia* in 1570 by Xylander, and in 1572 of the *Opera Omnia* of Plutarch by Stephanus (Henri II Estienne), a rich series of anthologies of Latin translations from the *Moralia* appeared. These include the collection of 17 essays, the work of various translators published as early as 1514 in Paris by the press of Badius Ascensius. This included translations by Erasmus, Poliziano, Sagundino, Valgulio, Guarino, Budé, Rinuccini; R. and G. Regio, Gian Pietro da Lucca, and Anonymous/Niccolò Perotti (*On envy and hatred, Libellus de differentia inter odium et invidiam*). There followed, in 1526, again from the press of Badius Ascensius, a new edition adding *On the control of anger* and *On curiosity*. This was followed by a new anthology of moral essays, published in Basel in 1530 by the press of Andreas Cratander [*Plutarchi Chaeronei philosophi historicique clarissimi Opuscula (quae quidem extant) omnia, undeque collecta et diligentissime iampridem recognita ...*]. Here the essays, already featured in the 1514 collection, were augmented with the translations by Negri, Barbato, Pirckheymer and Erasmus, with the exception of *On the love of wealth*. 1541 sees the publication, again in Basel, by Michael Isingrin, of a collection of 42 moral essays (*Plutarchi Chaeronei philosophi et historici clariss. Opera Moralia, quae in hunc usque diem latine extant, universa ...*). In addition to the essays already published in the preceding anthologies and omitting only the version of Poliziano, this presented the translations of *On the love of wealth* by Erasmus and those by the Germans Melanchthon, Nachtigall and Gryner. Other miscellaneous collections of translations appeared, one of which in three volumes published in Lyon at the workshop of Sebastian Greyff (Seb. Gryphius) between 1542 (vols. I–II) and 1551 (vol. III), which added to the preceding edition the version by Poliziano as well as those by Henryson, de Longhe and the scholars Longolius, Le Ferron and Breton. Highly influential was the anthology edited

by the German humanist Johann Haynopol (Janus Cornarius), himself one of the translators, and published in Basel in 1555 at the press of Michael Isingrin. A nearly complete anthology of Latin translations of the *Moralia* was published in Paris in 1566 by Guillaume Guillard and Thomas Belot.

Then, in 1570, the press of Thomas Guarinus in Basel brought out the Latin translation of the *Moralia* by the Heidelberg professor Guglielmo Xylander (Wilhelm Holtzman, 1532–1576), whom Wytténbach (p. lxx) pronounced the “*princeps*” of Plutarch’s interpreters and who had come to realise that earlier versions did not correspond to the sense of Plutarch’s texts.

In 1572, as we have noted, the first edition of a Latin translation of the complete works of Plutarch (*Moralia* and *Lives*), edited by Henricus Stephanus, was published in Geneva in thirteen volumes (the first six of which with the Greek texts, three for the *Moralia* and three for the *Lives*). The Latin translation of the *Moralia*, in vols VII–IX, reprint many of those already published by various authors such as Xylander, Erasmus, Kirchmeyer, Turnèbe, Budé, Poliziano etc. To these were added new translations by Stephanus himself: *On having many friends; On virtue and vice; Spartan sayings; Whether virtue can be taught; On envy and hatred; On the generation of the soul in the Timaeus*.

The known fifteenth-century translations of the *Moralia*, which number around seventy,<sup>26</sup> are the work of twenty-five different translators, and comprise around thirty Plutarchan essays largely on ethical-pedagogical or political-historical topics. Humanistic attention to the *Moralia* would, therefore, very nearly equal that given to the *Lives*.<sup>27</sup> Although these translations were solicited by noble patrons and dedicated to popes, princes, and other influential personages of the time (bound up as they were then to an individual patron or dedicatee), they had only a very limited circulation, judging by the scant number of codices presenting them. Driven by a concern with rendering the letter rather than the sense of the text, they proved to be erudite scholastic exercises with often less than felicitous results. This was not simply because the translators – who generally displayed a fairly broad knowledge of Plutarch’s *Moralia*, one that extended well beyond the particular essays they translated – lacked taste or an adequate comprehension of the language, but because of a negligence or carelessness due to an excessive lexical and syntactical conformity to the Greek original. This explains why very few of these translations indeed – including those whose author’s good name, rather than their own quality, made them unrivalled – circulated outside of Italy, if published.

<sup>26</sup> Bevegni (1994: 79–80).

<sup>27</sup> Stok (1998: 118).

Among those whose printed editions found a readership north of the Alps, those of Guarini, Rinuccini, Giovanni Regio, Perotti, Poliziano, Sagundino, Calfurnio are worthy of notice. Most, however, would soon be supplanted by the more mature translations that were more attuned to the distinctive demands of Latin expression. These flourished in the following century, when the interpretative and corrective technique of *traducere ad sententiam* came into use, and conferred on these translations a feature that goes beyond the technique of translation and the effort to render meaning. I refer specifically to the service these translations can render to philology by offering conjectural solutions and exegetical proposals that have left no trace in the extant textual tradition and that may have been drawn from another, lost tradition or have come from the translator himself, who through emendation (*ope ingenii*) aims to restore Plutarch's text, where modern criticism still struggles.

TABLE 1 Humanist Latin translations of the *Moralia* fourteenth–sixteenth centuries

<i>Ad princ. iner.</i>	Rinuccio Aretino Giovanni Aurispa Anonymous Erasmus	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>Adv. Col.</i>	Arnould Le / de Ferron	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>Am. narr.</i>	Angelo Poliziano	e e ed. H. II Estienne
<i>Amatorius</i>	Denis Lambin Arnould Le / de Ferron Erasmus Wilhelm Holtzmann	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>Animine an corp.</i>	Cencio De' Rustici Erasmus	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>An seni resp.</i>	Gybertus Longolius	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>An virt. doc.</i>	Giovanni Corsi Joachim Kammermeister Ottmar Nachtigall Henri II Estienne	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>An vitiositas</i>	Ottmar Nachtigall	ed. H. II Estienne

TABLE 1 Humanist Latin translations of the *Moralia* fourteenth–sixteenth centuries (*cont.*)

<i>Apophth. Lac.</i>	Antonio Cassarino	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>Apophth. Lacaen.</i>	Francesco Filelfo	
<i>Instit. Lac.</i>	Lampugnino Birago	
	Raffaele Regio	
	Erasmus	
	Wilhelm Holtzmann	
	Henri II Estienne	
	Henri II Estienne	
	Henri II Estienne	
<i>Aqua an ignis</i>	Gybertus Longolius	ed. H. II Estienne
	Johann Haynpol	
	Wilhelm Holtzmann	
<i>Bellone an pace</i>	Wilhelm Holtzmann	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>Comp. Ar. et Men.</i>	Wilhelm Holtzmann	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>Con. praec.</i>	Giovanni Volta	ed. H. II Estienne
	Carlo Valgilio	
	Jean Lodé	
	Wilhelm Holtzmann	
<i>Cons. ad Apoll.</i>	Alamanno Rinuccini	ed. H. II Estienne
	Ottmar Nachtigall	
	Stefano Negri	
	Bernardo Monaco	
	Wilhelm Holtzmann	
<i>Cons. ad ux.</i>	Robert Breton	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>De ad. et am.</i>	Antonio Cassarino	ed. H. II Estienne
	Guarino Veronese	
	Giovambattista Buoninsegni	
	Lampugnino Birago	
	Giovanni Lorenzi	
	Ludovico Odasi	
	Erasmus	
<i>De Al. Magn. fort.</i>	Jacopo Angeli da Scarperia	ed. H. II Estienne
	Niccolò Perotti	
	Guillaume Budé	
<i>De am. mult.</i>	Ottmar Nachtigall	ed. H. II Estienne
	Johann Otho	
	Wilhelm Holtzmann	
	Henri II Estienne	

TABLE 1 Humanist Latin translations of the *Moralia* fourteenth–sixteenth centuries (*cont.*)

<i>De am. prol.</i>	Gybertus Longolius	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>De an. procr.</i>	Giovanni Corsi	ed. H. II Estienne
	Adrien Turnèbe	ed. H. II Estienne
	Wilhelm Holtzmann	
	Henri II Estienne	
<i>De aud.</i>	Giovanni Calfurnio	ed. H. II Estienne
	Richard Pace	
	Ottmar Nachtigall	
	Wilhelm Holtzmann	
<i>De aud. poet.</i>	Gentian Hervet	ed. H. II Estienne
	Ottmar Nachtigall	
	Wilhelm Holtzmann	
<i>De cap. ex inim.</i>	Antonio Cassarino	ed. H. II Estienne
	Giano Pannonio	
	Giovambattista Buoninsegni	
	Pirro Vizzani	
	Ludovico Odasi	
	Giovanni Lorenzi	
	Giovanni Corsi	
	Erasmus	
	Cristophorus Longolius	
	Richard Pace	
<i>De coh. ira</i>	Atumano	ed. H. II Estienne
	Coluccio Salutati	
	Antonio Cassarino	
	Lampugnino Birago	
	Bartolomeo Sacchi	
	Giovanni Lorenzi	
	Willibald Pirckheymer	
	Erasmus	
<i>De comm. not.</i>	Wilhelm Holtzmann	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>De cup. div.</i>	Antonio Cassarino	ed. H. II Estienne
	Erasmus	
	Richard Pace	
	Willibald Pirckheymer	
	Philipp Schwarzerdt	

TABLE 1 Humanist Latin translations of the *Moralia* fourteenth–sixteenth centuries (*cont.*)

<i>De cur.</i>	Giano Pannonio Willibald Pirckheymer Giovanni Lorenzi Erasmus Johannes Kessel	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>De def. orac.</i>	Adrien Turnèbe	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>De E</i>	Wilhelm Holtzmann	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>De esu</i>	Louis Rousard Johann Otho Philipp Schwarzerdt Wilhelm Holtzmann Henri II Estienne	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>De exilio</i>	Angelo Barbato	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>De facie</i>	Wilhelm Holtzmann	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>De fato</i>	Adrien Turnèbe Wilhelm Holtzmann	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>De fortuna</i>	Ottmar Nachtigall Wilhelm Holtzmann	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>De fort. Rom.</i>	Jacopo Angeli da Scarperia Guillaume Budé	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>De frat. am.</i>	Thomas Kirchmeyer Louis Rousard Stefano Negri	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>De gar.</i>	Giovanni Lorenzi Richard Pace Willibald Pirckheymer Thomas Kirchmeyer Louis Rousard	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>De genio Socratis</i>	Thomas Kirchmeyer	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>De Her. mal.</i>	Wilhelm Holtzmann	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>De inv. et od.</i>	Giovambattista Buoninsegni Niccolò Perotti Ludovico Odasi Gybertus Longolius Henri II Estienne	
<i>De Is. et Os.</i>	Giovanni Lorenzi Sjoerd Pietersz Wilhelm Holtzmann	ed. H. II Estienne

TABLE 1 Humanist Latin translations of the *Moralia* fourteenth–sixteenth centuries (*cont.*)

<i>De lat. viv.</i>	Giovanni Corsi Erasmus	<i>ed. H. II Estienne</i>
<i>De lib. educ.</i>	Guarino Veronese Johann Otho Peeters Sjoerd Philipp Schwarzerdt Wilhelm Holtzmann	<i>ed. H. II Estienne</i>
<i>De mus.</i>	Marsilio Ficino Carlo Valgulio	<i>ed. H. II Estienne</i>
<i>De prim. frig.</i>	Adrien Turnèbe	<i>ed. H. II Estienne</i>
<i>De prof. in virt.</i>	Leonardo Bruni & Coluccio Salutati Giovambattista Buoninsegni Ottmar Nachtigall Wilhelm Holtzmann	<i>ed. H. II Estienne</i>
<i>De Pyth. or.</i>	Wilhelm Holtzmann	<i>ed. H. II Estienne</i>
<i>De se ipsum laud.</i>	Antonio Cassarino Lampugnino Birago Giovanni Lorenzi Thomas Kirchmeyer Giulio Cornelio Eugubino	<i>ed. H. II Estienne</i>
<i>De sera num.</i>	Willibald Pirckheymer	<i>ed. H. II Estienne</i>
<i>De soll. an.</i>	Simon Gryner	<i>ed. H. II Estienne</i>
<i>De Stoic. rep.</i>	Johann Haynpol Edward Henryson	<i>ed. H. II Estienne</i>
<i>De sup.</i>	John Cheke Guillaume Plançon Thomas Kirchmeyer	<i>ed. H. II Estienne</i>
<i>De tranq. an.</i>	Guillaume Budé Thomas Kirchmeyer	<i>ed. H. II Estienne</i>
<i>De tuenda</i>	Anonymous xv c. Giovanni Lorenzi Erasmus	<i>ed. H. II Estienne</i>
<i>De unius</i>	Gybertus Longolius Nicola Sagundino	<i>ed. H. II Estienne</i>

TABLE 1 Humanist Latin translations of the *Moralia* fourteenth–sixteenth centuries (*cont.*)

<i>De virt. et vit.</i>	Cencio de' Rustici Ottmar Nachtigall Henri II Estienne Wilhelm Holtzmann	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>De virt. mor.</i>	Carlo Valgulio Andrea Matteo Acquaviva d'Aragona Joachim Kammermeister Wilhelm Holtzmann	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>De vit. aer.</i>	Willibald Pirckheymer	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>De vit. pud.</i>	Erasmus Johann Caesarius	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>Dec. or. vit.</i>	Alamanno Rinuccini Robert Breton	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>Gryllus</i>	Antonio Cassarino Lampugnino Birago Giovanni Regio Domenico Bonomino Simon Gryner	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>Maxime cum principibus</i>	Theodore of Gaza Erasmus	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>Mul. virt.</i>	Alamanno Rinuccini Wilhelm Holtzmann	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>Non posse</i>	Arnould Le / de Ferron	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>Parall. Graec. et</i>	Guarino Veronese	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>Rom.</i>	Wilhelm Holtzmann	
<i>Plac. philos.</i>	Guillaume Budé	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>Praec. ger. reip.</i>	Giovanni Lorenzi Carlo Valgulio Nicola Sagundino	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>Quaest. conv.</i>	Philipp Schwarzerdt Ottmar Nachtigall Johann Haynpol Wilhelm Holtzmann Adriaan de Longhe	ed. H. II Estienne ed. H. II Estienne

TABLE 1 Humanist Latin translations of the *Moralia* fourteenth–sixteenth centuries (*cont.*)

<i>Quaest. Graec.</i>	Leonardo Bruni Guarino Veronese Gian Pietro da Lucca Bartolomeo Sacchi Wilhelm Holtzmann	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>Quaest. nat.</i>	Gybertus Longolius	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>Quaest. Plat.</i>	Gybertus Longolius Ludovico Nogarola	
<i>Quaest. Rom.</i>	Guarino Veronese Gian Pietro da Lucca Wilhelm Holtzmann	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>Reg. et imp. apophth.</i>	Francesco Filelfo Giano Pannonio Antonio Cassarino Raffaele Regio Wilhelm Holtzmann	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>Sept. sap. conv.</i>	Antonio Cassarino Giovanni Aurispa Niccolò Perotti Edward Henryson Pieter Platevoet Thomas Kirchmeyer Adrien Turnèbe Wilhelm Holtzmann	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>Stoic. absurd. poet.</i>	Johann Haynpol	ed. H. II Estienne
<i>Vita Homeri</i>	Pellegrino Agli	

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## Plutarch and Montaigne

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Michel Eyquem de Montaigne was born in 1533 at the Château Montaigne, near Bordeaux, into a family that had acquired both the estate and the noble title that went with it only three generations earlier. His father, Pierre Eyquem, was a businessman who dealt in fish and wine, and his mother, Antoinette de Loupes de Villeneuve, came from a prosperous Spanish family of Jewish origin. By the time of his birth – three years prior to Calvin’s publication of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* – France was already embroiled in the religious conflicts that would continue into the seventeenth century, and just as France became divided along religious lines, so did Montaigne’s family: while he and four of his siblings remained loyal to the Catholic Church throughout their lives, his other three siblings became Protestants.

Montaigne’s father, inspired by new pedagogical methods that he had discovered while serving as a soldier in Italy, arranged for the young Michel to be taught Latin as his first language, and then, at the age of six, sent him off to the College de Guyenne, where he spent the next seven years of his life. Though his Latin was excellent, he apparently never acquired more than a rudimentary knowledge of Greek, and so he seems to have come to know Plutarch later in life, through Jacques Amyot’s French translations of the *Lives*, published in 1559, and the *Moralia*, published in 1572.<sup>1</sup>

Between his departure from Guyenne and the beginning of his career as a magistrate in Bordeaux in 1557, little is known about Montaigne’s whereabouts, though it has been suggested that he may have studied law at Toulouse. As the wars of religion escalated in the 1560s, Montaigne continued to serve as a magistrate in various courts before selling his post in 1570 and retiring to the estate that he had recently inherited from his father.

In 1572 he began to write his *Essais*, which he published in the form of two books in 1580 before setting off on a trip through Germany to Rome, a journey

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<sup>1</sup> See Frame (1943: 262) and Villey (2004: 364). Hereafter the book, chapter, and page of both the Frame translation (1943) and the Villey-Saulnier edition (2004) will be cited parenthetically as follows: (2.4.262; VS 364).

that he wrote about in his *Travel Journals*, which, along with 39 letters and the *Essais* themselves, constitute the entirety of Montaigne's extant corpus. In 1581 he was summoned back from Rome to Bordeaux to serve as the city's mayor, a post which he occupied for two terms of two years each. His tenure as mayor – which he discusses in the chapter "Of husbanding your will" – was unremarkable except insofar as he managed to keep the peace between hostile groups of Catholics and Protestants in the area. After completing his second term he returned to work on his *Essais*, publishing a new edition with a third book of essays in 1588.

Meanwhile, he continued to be involved in politics, advising the Protestant heir to the French throne, Henri of Navarre, and Navarre's mistress, Diane d'Andoins de Gramont, as well as serving as a go-between for Navarre and the French King Henri III. After Henri III's assassination in 1589, Navarre, now Henri IV, invited Montaigne to join his court, but Montaigne declined for reasons of health. He died on September 13, 1592.

Up to the end of his life Montaigne had continued to make revisions and additions in the margins of his personal copy of the *Essais* and after his death, his literary executrix, Marie de Gournay, incorporated those marginalia – which ultimately lengthened the *Essais* by a third – into an edition that she published in 1595. The fact that Montaigne died without ever having finished writing his *Essais* is in keeping with the nature of his book, one that Hugo Friedrich describes as "inconceivable as a finished work".<sup>2</sup> The title itself, which in French can mean "attempts", "trials", or "experiments", conveys the sense in which its contents are provisional, imperfect, and incomplete. Montaigne's sense of his *Essais* as a never-ending work in progress is partly due to his appreciation of the nature of his primary subject – his ever changing self – and partly due to his conviction that it is impossible to give a definitive account of what is:

I take the first subject that chance offers. They are all equally good to me. And I never plan to develop them completely. For I do not see the whole of anything; neither do those who promise to show it to us. Of a hundred members and faces that each thing has, I take one, sometimes only to lick it, sometimes to brush the surface, sometimes to pinch it to the bone. I give it a stab, not as wide but as deep as I know how. And most often I like to take them from some unaccustomed point of view. I would venture to treat some matter thoroughly, if I knew myself less well. Scattering a word here, there another, samples separated from their context, dispersed, without a plan and without a promise, I am not bound to

<sup>2</sup> Friedrich (1991:1).

make something of them or adhere to them myself without varying when I please and giving myself up to doubt and uncertainty and my ruling quality, which is ignorance.

1.50.219; VS 302

The 107 essays of his book – which he often referred to as “chapters” – cover an extremely wide variety of topics, including morals, psychology, theology, history, politics, education, culture, and Montaigne himself, a topic which he explored and revealed both directly, by means of descriptions of his habits and tastes, and indirectly, by means of his judgments on other topics. Montaigne often approaches these topics obliquely, by way of anecdotes taken from the ancient world as well as reports of the views of others, mixed in with expressions of his own judgments. Initially, the order of the chapters in the book appears random, and Montaigne gives readers the impression that the book as a whole was put together almost haphazardly, as though it were more a work of inspiration than reflection. Yet after careful study, scholars have identified structural patterns and links among chapters situated together in the book, though the degree to which these patterns and links are intentional is a matter of scholarly debate.<sup>3</sup>

One feature of Montaigne’s thought that is not a matter of scholarly debate is his appreciation for Plutarch, given his explicit expressions of that appreciation, and the undeniable evidence of Plutarch’s influence on Montaigne’s thought and literary style.<sup>4</sup> Isabelle Konstantinovic, in *Montaigne et Plutarque*, reports that Montaigne borrows passages or stories from Plutarch an astonishing 763 times in the *Essais*.<sup>5</sup> While in many cases Montaigne does not explicitly acknowledge that he is borrowing from Plutarch, he often refers to the fact of his borrowing from ancient authors, and Plutarch’s name appears 83 times<sup>6</sup> in the *Essais*, including in the title of one chapter, “Defence of Seneca and Plutarch”, where Montaigne’s praise for Plutarch reaches its zenith. There he refers to Plutarch as a teacher of virtue (2.32.549; VS 726), and judges Plutarch to be the most judicious author in the world (2.32.546; VS 723), which is high praise coming from Montaigne, for whom the cultivation of judgment is the most important part of a man’s formation: “His education, work, and study aim only at forming this” (1.26.111, VS 152). In fact, Montaigne’s estimation of Plutarch’s judgement is so high that he christens Amyot’s translation

3 On the question of structural patterns within the *Essais*, see Quint (1998) and Schaefer (1990).

4 See Calhoun (2015: 13–39).

5 Konstantinovic (1989: 23 n.127).

6 Konstantinovic (1989: 1).

of Plutarch's *Moralia* as "our breviary" (2.4.262; VS 364), thereby elevating the *Moralia* to the status of the official prayer book of the Catholic Church, and suggesting that it ought to be used as a daily source of meditation, reflection, and prayer (2.4.262; VS 363–364). Montaigne's praise of Plutarch raises the question of how Montaigne understands Plutarch as a teacher of virtue. On the one hand, Montaigne seems to think that Plutarch offers us sound moral judgments and examples useful for our moral imaginations. He says of Plutarch's books that they teach him "to arrange my humors and my ways" (2.10.300; VS 413) and that Plutarch's "teaching is the cream of philosophy, and presented in simple and pertinent fashion" (2.10.300; VS 413).<sup>7</sup> This view of Plutarch as teaching us virtue by presenting us with edifying examples and sound assessments of these examples seems to be consistent with Plutarch's own understanding of his project, as expressed at the beginning of his *Life of Timoleon*, where he says that he writes both for himself and for others for the purpose of facilitating moral improvement through the presentation of moral virtues as they manifest themselves in the lives of particular individuals.<sup>8</sup>

Yet elsewhere Montaigne seems to suggest that Plutarch's teaching is anything but simple and straightforward. In the course of describing his ideal form of education in the essay entitled "Of the education of children", Montaigne writes:

Let [our student] be taught not so much the histories as how to judge them ... I have read in Livy a hundred things that another man has not read in him. Plutarch has read in him a hundred besides the ones I could read, and perhaps besides what the author had put in. For some it is a purely grammatical study; for others, the skeleton of philosophy, in which the most abstruse parts of our nature are penetrated. There are in Plutarch many extensive discussions, well worth knowing, for in my judgment he is the master workman in that field; but there are a thousand that he has only just touched on; he merely points out with his finger where we are to go, if we like, and sometimes is content to make only a stab at the heart of a subject. We must snatch these bits out of there and display them properly. Just as that remark of his, that the inhabitants of Asia served one single man because they could not pronounce one single syllable, which is "No", may have given the matter and the impulsion to

<sup>7</sup> Montaigne writes that while not being explicitly didactic, Plutarch's *Lives* and *Moralia* "guide us" (2.10.301; VS 413), and his opinions "are Platonic, mild, and accommodated to civil society" (2.10.300; VS 413).

<sup>8</sup> *Tim.* 1.1–4.

La Boétie for his *Voluntary Servitude*. Just to see him pick out a trivial action in a man's life, or a word which seems unimportant: this is a treatise in itself.

1.26.115; VS 156–7

It seems, then, that Montaigne takes Plutarch to be writing for two audiences: on the one hand, he is a moralist who provides material for our moral imagination that is meant to inspire us to act well. On the other hand, Plutarch – whom Montaigne describes as “an author so thorny and compact” (2.4.262; VS 363) – is a *provocateur* who teaches readers intellectual virtue, by challenging them to exercise their own judgment and imagination. Montaigne elaborates on this point in “Of vanity”: “There are works of Plutarch's in which he forgets his theme, in which the treatment of his subject is found only incidentally, quite smothered in foreign matter. See his movements in *The daemon of Socrates*. Lord, what beauty there is in these lusty sallies and this variation, and more so the more casual and accidental they seem” (3.9.761; VS 994). Immediately following these remarks, Montaigne points out that he does the same thing: “It is the inattentive reader who loses my subject, not I. Some word about it will always be found off in a corner, which will not fail to be sufficient, though it takes little room” (3.9.761; VS 994). Indeed, just as he presents Plutarch as a canny reader of Livy, and himself as such a reader of Plutarch, so he invites his own readers to take a similar approach to his book:

And how many stories have I spread around which say nothing of themselves, but from which anyone who troubles to pluck them with a little ingenuity will produce numberless essays. Neither these stories nor my quotations serve always simply for example, authority, or ornament. I do not esteem them solely for the use I derive from them. They often bear, outside of my subject, the seeds of a richer and bolder material, and sound obliquely a subtler note, both for myself, who do not wish to express anything more, and for those who get my drift.

1.40.185; VS 251

According to Montaigne, in addition to essaying his readers' judgment with his “thorny and compact” style, Plutarch presents things in multiple ways, “variously and contrastingly” (3.12.814; VS 1063). Timothy Duff offers a similar reading of Plutarch's *Lives*. He argues that in a number of *Lives*, Plutarch problematises common conceptions about morality and presents readers with difficulties with which they must grapple for themselves. For instance, Duff shows how in the *Lives of Phocion and Cato Minor* Plutarch raises the question – without

offering a clear answer – of what the relationship is between private morality and the public interest. When – if ever – ought one to compromise his values for the public good? Similarly, in the *Lives of Lysander and Sulla*, Duff shows how Plutarch depicts these men in ethically ambiguous ways, leaving it to the reader to draw his or her own conclusions about how to judge their character.<sup>9</sup>

Just as he presents Plutarch as a master of presenting things in various and contrasting ways, so Montaigne also describes himself as raising questions more than providing answers, and as unapologetically contradicting himself when he sees fit to do so:

I give my soul now one face, now another, according to which direction I turn it. If I speak of myself in different ways, that is because I look at myself in different ways. All contradictions may be found in me by some twist and in some fashion ... and whoever studies himself really attentively finds in himself, yes, even in his judgment, this gyration and discord. I have nothing to say about myself absolutely, simply, and solidly, without confusion and without mixture, or in one word. *Distinguo* is the most universal member of my logic.

2.1.242; VS 335

Thus Montaigne seems to read Plutarch as teaching two kinds of virtue to two audiences: moral virtue to those who read casually, and intellectual to those who read critically. That Plutarch himself recognised this as a possibility is confirmed by the opening passage of *On the sign of Socrates*, where he discusses different types of audiences: those who remain on the surface of things, and those who desire to penetrate to the heart of the matter.<sup>10</sup> Montaigne also discusses the different audiences of his book, and scholars have found room for both rhetorical and theoretical readings of the *Essais*.<sup>11</sup> Thus some scholars take the *Essais* to be primarily a response to the civil wars gripping France at the time and so focus on the rhetorical dimensions of Montaigne's project. David Quint, for instance, argues that Montaigne's aim is to teach morals, in that he is attempting to persuade the nobility of France – caught up in the wars of religion – that one can yield with honour.<sup>12</sup> Yet along with this rhetorical project, there also seems to be a critical or theoretical dimension to his project, one in which the central problem is understanding rather than

<sup>9</sup> See chapters 5 and 6 in Duff (1999).

<sup>10</sup> *De genio Socr.* 575B–C.

<sup>11</sup> See 1.54, "Of vain subtleties".

<sup>12</sup> Quint (1998: x). On the political nature of the *Essais*, see also Schaefer (1990).

morals, and one in which he raises questions and investigates difficult theoretical issues – such as those having to do with the self, education, friendship, and culture – without offering any easy answers. Consequently other scholars focus on Montaigne's scepticism and theoretical aims.<sup>13</sup> Of course these two dimensions of the *Essais* are not unrelated; the essential point here is that they are both part of Montaigne's project in writing the *Essais*, just as they both seem to be parts of Plutarch's project in the *Lives* and *Moralia*.

Montaigne also adopts elements of Plutarch's methodology. As Plutarch writes *Lives*, in which he aims to reveal the *ēthē* of his subjects, so Montaigne writes his own *Life*, in which he aims to communicate what he calls his “meurs,” which is the French term that Amyot uses to translate *ēthos* in Plutarch.<sup>14</sup> Further, echoing Plutarch's remarks from the beginning of the *Life of Alexander*, Montaigne insists that one cannot come to know and judge a life based on a man's actions and the outcomes of his ventures:

What I chiefly portray is my cogitations, a shapeless subject that does not lend itself to expression in actions. It is all I can do to couch my thoughts in this airy medium of words ... My actions would tell more about fortune than about me. They bear witness to their own part, not to mine, unless it be by conjecture and without certainty: they are samples which display only details. I expose myself entire: my portrait is a cadaver on which the veins, the muscles, and the tendons appear at a glance, each part in its place ... It is not my deeds that I write down; it is myself, it is my essence.

2.6.274; VS 379

Thus he paints his self-portrait by reporting his judgments, tastes, and the idiosyncratic habits that define his *meurs* (see especially “Of repentance” and “Of experience”).

Moreover, in his portrait of himself and others, Montaigne employs Plutarch's methods of juxtaposition and comparison in order to cast into relief some of the *meurs* that he aims to communicate. So, for example, in the brief first chapter of his book, “By diverse means we arrive at the same end”, Montaigne sets up a series of oppositions between figures and dispositions that he will go on to compare and contrast throughout his book. He juxtaposes the merciful and the relentless, the people and the great, himself and the Stoics, and the Theban general Epaminondas and Alexander the Great, all in a roughly three-page discussion of the question of how to dispose toward mercy those

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Starobinski (1985) and Hartle (2003).

<sup>14</sup> See Amyot, ed. Screech (1971: 32v F).

who hold our lives in their hands. There are two different means of achieving this end, he says: by submission or by audacity and steadfastness. After having given some examples of princes who were moved to mercy by the audacity and steadfastness of those whom they had defeated, Montaigne writes: "Either one of these two ways would easily win me, for I am wonderfully lax in the direction of mercy and gentleness. As a matter of fact, I believe I should be likely to surrender more naturally to compassion than to esteem. Yet to the Stoics pity is a vicious passion; they want us to succour the afflicted, but not to unbend and sympathize with them" (1.1.4; VS 8). He then goes on to propose an explanation of why some are moved to mercy by submission, while others are moved by audacity: perhaps those who are themselves soft and easy going – such as women and "the common herd" – are more easily moved by submission, while those who are themselves audacious and obstinate – the great – are moved by audacity and steadfastness in those they conquer. But then Montaigne introduces examples that demonstrate that the common herd has proven itself capable of being moved to mercy by the steadfastness of those who were at its mercy, the Thebans, who granted clemency to Epaminondas, being his prime example. Finally, he concludes with a discussion of Alexander's merciless treatment of the Thebans, mentioned only a few passages above for their merciful treatment of Epaminondas, whom Montaigne will go on not only to celebrate for never having killed a man that he had vanquished but also to place above Alexander as the most outstanding man.

This ranking of Epaminondas as most outstanding comes in the chapter titled, appropriately, "Of the most outstanding men". Here Montaigne compares some of the greatest men of Greece and Rome. He ranks Homer above Virgil, Alexander above Julius Caesar, and Epaminondas above the Roman general Scipio Aemilianus. He then goes on to rank Epaminondas as the most outstanding of all men, full stop, and in doing so, once again juxtaposes him and Alexander:

As for his character and conscience, [Epaminondas] very far surpassed all those who have ever undertaken to manage affairs. For in this respect, which must principally be considered, which alone truly marks what we are, and which I weigh alone against all the others together, he yields to no philosopher, not even to Socrates. In this man innocence is a key quality, sovereign, constant, uniform, incorruptible. In comparison, it appears in Alexander as subordinate, uncertain, streaky, soft, and accidental.

2.36.573; VS 756

Montaigne then goes on to talk of evidence of Epaminondas' "exceeding goodness" (2.36.573; VS 757) and "humanity, even toward the enemy" (2.36.574; VS 757). In a later essay, "Of the useful and the honourable", he reaffirms his judgment of Epaminondas' exceeding excellence. It is here that Montaigne recounts how Epaminondas never killed a man he had vanquished, and after reporting that Epaminondas "judged anyone a wicked man ... who among his enemies and in battle did not spare his friend and his host" (3.1.609; VS 801), Montaigne continues:

Terrible with blood and iron, he goes breaking and shattering a nation invincible against anyone but himself, and turns aside in the middle of such a melee on meeting his host and his friend. Truly that man was in command of war itself, who made it endure the curb of benignity at the point of its greatest heat, all inflamed as it was and foaming with frenzy and slaughter. It is a miracle to be able to mingle some semblance of justice with such actions; but it belongs only to the strength of Epaminondas to be able to mingle with them the sweetness and ease of the gentlest ways, and pure innocence.

3.1.609; VS 801–2

Most of the accounts that Montaigne offers of Epaminondas can be traced back to Plutarch's *Lives* and *Moralia*. But as David Quint points out, neither the scene that Montaigne describes nor the judgment upon which it is based can be found in Plutarch or any of the other extant sources of information about Epaminondas.<sup>15</sup>

This is consistent, however, with Montaigne's professed approach to history and his appreciation for Plutarch, his primary source on Epaminondas. For in "Of the power of the imagination" Montaigne is explicit about the fact that he is not concerned with the historical truth of the stories he tells in his *Essais* (1.21.75; VS 105–106), and in fact, he connects his own attitude to the issue of historical veracity with what he takes to be Plutarch's:

Plutarch might well say to us, concerning his accomplishments in this line, that the credit belongs to others if his examples are wholly and everywhere true; but that their being useful to posterity, and presented with a luster which lights our way to virtue, that is his work. There is

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<sup>15</sup> Quint (1998: 40).

no danger – as there is in a medicinal drug – in an old story being this way or that.

1.21.76; VS 106

Montaigne addresses this theme again in “Defence of Seneca and Plutarch”. In that chapter, Montaigne begins by defending Seneca against those who use the testimony of Dio the historian to defame Seneca’s character. He points out that Tacitus’ account of Seneca’s character is quite positive, and then, on the question of whom is to be believed – Tacitus or Dio – Montaigne quickly dispatches Dio by arguing that he had bad judgment, as evidenced by the fact that he favoured Caesar over Pompey and Antony over Cicero (2.32.546; VS 722). He then moves on to Plutarch, whom he defends against Jean Bodin’s charge that Plutarch sometimes writes “incredible and entirely fabulous things” (2.32.546; VS 722).<sup>16</sup> Montaigne replies that “To charge [Plutarch] with having taken incredible and impossible things as genuine coin is to accuse the most judicious author in the world of a lack of judgment” (2.32.546; VS 722–3). But he does not deny that some of Plutarch’s accounts of human actions are less than credible. Rather, Montaigne seems to suggest that Plutarch’s willingness to tell such stories is indicative of his judicious suspension of judgment regarding what human beings are capable of, morally speaking, and that it goes with Plutarch’s ends as a writer, which are not primarily historical.

Later on in the chapter Montaigne addresses Bodin’s charge that Plutarch favoured the Greeks over the Romans, in that he matched Greeks with Romans whose accomplishments were much greater, thereby elevating the status of the Greeks by these comparisons. Montaigne replies: “This is attacking precisely what is most excellent and praiseworthy in Plutarch. For in his parallels (which are the most admirable part of his work, and in which, in my opinion, he took particular satisfaction), the fidelity and sincerity of his judgments equals their depth and weight. He is a philosopher who teaches us virtue” (2.32.549; VS 726).

Montaigne’s broad agreement with Plutarch’s judgement appears to be connected to a shared set of epistemological, metaphysical, and moral commitments that seem to lie at the heart of both thinkers’ projects. Epistemologically, Montaigne holds that we can never achieve perfect knowledge of either creation or the Creator (2.12.455–457; VS 601–4). Among other places, he expresses this view at the conclusion of the “Apology for Raymond Sebond”, the longest chapter of the *Essais* and the one that contains Montaigne’s most sustained treatment of scepticism. In presenting his judgement that we can never

<sup>16</sup> On Montaigne’s preference for Plutarch’s approach to history over Bodin’s, see Farquhar (2006).

achieve perfect knowledge, Montaigne draws directly from Plutarch's *On The 'E' at Delphi* (392A–393A). Hence for both Montaigne and Plutarch, the quest for truth is never complete in this life: "For we are born to quest after truth; to possess it belongs to a greater power ... The world is but a school of inquiry. The question is not who will hit the ring, but who will make the best runs at it" (3.8.708; VS 928).

The necessary imperfection of our knowledge is mirrored, for Plutarch, by the necessary imperfection of the cosmos. For Plutarch finds himself committed to the idea that there are two fundamental and opposing forces that govern the both the cosmos and the human being.<sup>17</sup> Plutarch describes these principles as "The One" and the "Indefinite Dyad," the latter of which he sometimes refers to as the "power of differentiation" that is responsible for all division, difference, and evil.<sup>18</sup> While Montaigne does not offer a systematic account of his cosmology, at a number of points in the *Essais* he expresses a belief in the ineradicable presence of diversity, differentiation, and evil in the human world and the human being, and in "Of experience", he gives an account of this belief in terms taken from Amyot's translation of Plutarch's *On tranquillity of mind*:

We must learn to endure what we cannot avoid. Our life is composed, like the harmony of the world, of contrary things, also of different tones, sweet and harsh, sharp and flat, soft and loud. If a musician only liked one kind, what would he have to say? He must know how to use them together and blend them. And so we must do with good and evil, which are consubstantial with our life. Our existence is impossible without this mixture, and one element is no less necessary for it than the other.<sup>19</sup>

3.13.835; VS 1089–1090

Montaigne's conviction that human beings are necessarily imperfect is linked with his impatience with political idealism, his tolerant attitude towards others who hold different beliefs, and his acceptance of social and political imperfection, the last of which has often been interpreted as political conservatism.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, it is linked with his criticism of those – including the Stoics in particular – whom he takes to be presumptuously trying to transcend the limits

<sup>17</sup> See *De Is. et Os.* 369A–371A.

<sup>18</sup> *De def. or.* 428B–429D.

<sup>19</sup> See "De la tranquillité l'âme et repos de l'esprit", folio 74rA in Plutarch (1971). For a discussion of how Plutarch's dualism informs Montaigne's moral thought, see chapter 2 of Welch (2009).

<sup>20</sup> On the question of Montaigne's conservatism, see Sayce (1972: 233–259), Friedrich (1991: 192–196).

of human nature. Thus in the conclusion of the 'Apology' he criticises Seneca and the Stoics for trying to raise themselves above their humanity, while at the conclusion of "Of experience" – the last chapter of the *Essais* – he criticises certain Christians of his own age who strive for moral perfection: "That is madness: instead of changing into angels, they change into beasts; instead of raising themselves, they lower themselves" (3.13.856; VS 1115). In opposition to such madness, Montaigne argues, "It is an absolute perfection and virtually divine to know how to enjoy our being rightfully. We seek other conditions because we do not understand the use of our own" (3.13.857; VS 1115).

Just as Plutarch and Montaigne both attack the presumption of those who strive to become more than human, so they seem to have very similar views on the virtues constitutive of a good human life. According to Jacqueline de Romilly, Plutarch's conception of moral excellence encompasses a broad set of virtues that de Romilly categorises under the term *douceur*.<sup>21</sup> *Douceur* expresses itself in a variety of ways, as gentleness, calmness, humanity, kindness, and compassion. Its opposites are cruelty, harshness, and violence. Montaigne, for his part, ranks cruelty as the worst vice (2.11.313, VS 429), while, as we saw above, he selects Epaminondas as the most outstanding man precisely because of his extraordinary innocence, gentleness, and humanity. Moreover, as David Quint has pointed out, Epaminondas' "clement traits – *douceur, debonnaireté, facilité, mollesse, bonté, humanité*, and, above all, *innocence* – turn out to be identical to those of Montaigne himself, as they emerge from the self-portrait of his book".<sup>22</sup> Indeed, as we saw above in our discussion of the first chapter of the *Essais*, it is by way of his gentleness and compassion that Montaigne introduces himself to his readers, while at the same time he contrasts his own *douceur* with the inflexible and pitiless virtue of the Stoics.

There are also, of course, significant points of divergence between Montaigne and Plutarch. Eric MacPhail has argued that Montaigne uses Plutarch's *On the fortune and virtue of Alexander the Great* as a counter-model for his own "Of cannibals", in that whereas Plutarch's epideictic speech is founded upon Greek ethnocentrism, Montaigne uses an epideictic speech – in some ways modelled upon Plutarch's – to challenge French ethnocentrism.<sup>23</sup> A more general point of divergence concerns the places of metaphysics and cosmology in their writings. These are subjects that Plutarch explores systematically in the *Moralia*, which include, for example, *On the generation of the soul in the Timaeus*. By contrast, Montaigne presents no systematic or technical discussion of

<sup>21</sup> de Romilly (1979: 1).

<sup>22</sup> Quint (1998: 41).

<sup>23</sup> MacPhail (2012: 30).

cosmological or metaphysical issues; whatever cosmological or metaphysical remarks he makes are embedded in essays whose primary subjects are the human world and the human condition. Moreover, while it seems right to describe Montaigne as writing his own *Life*, modelled to some extent on Plutarch's *Lives*, it is also important to note that the life he presents to readers is not the life of a statesman or orator, but rather of a private citizen. Indeed, the choice to write about a common human being is one that Montaigne discusses at a number of points in the *Essais*, and one that is in keeping with one of the main themes of the *Essais*, which he sums up in remarks such as the following, from "Of repentance": "I set forth a humble and inglorious life; that does not matter. You can tie up all moral philosophy with a common and private life just as well as with a life of richer stuff. Each man bears the entire form of man's estate" (3.2.611; VS 805).<sup>24</sup>

Nonetheless, given the many points of convergence between Plutarch and Montaigne, it should come as no surprise that the Montaigne scholar Hugo Friedrich refers to Plutarch as "a Montaigne of antiquity".<sup>25</sup> Montaigne was clearly a very careful reader of Plutarch and believed that he had come to a profound understanding of Plutarch himself: "Plutarch's writings, if we savour them aright, reveal him to us well enough, and I think I know him even into his soul" (2.31.541; VS 716). In the hope of advancing efforts to savour Montaigne's own writings aright, much ink has been spilt on the question of his debts to the ancient schools of scepticism, both Pyrrhonian and Academic, and this scholarship has undoubtedly illuminated certain aspects of Montaigne's philosophical work. Yet in light of Montaigne's apparent appropriations of Plutarch's ontological starting points, methods, and fundamental aims as a writer, it begins to seem that an even more fruitful approach to understanding Montaigne's relationship with ancient Greek philosophy may well be one that focuses on his engagement with Plutarch.

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<sup>24</sup> On the significance of this choice, see Hartle (2003).

<sup>25</sup> Friedrich (1991: 71).

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## Taking Centre Stage: Plutarch and Shakespeare

*Miryana Dimitrova*

William Shakespeare (1564–1616) was familiar with various classical sources but it was Plutarch's *Lives of the noble Greeks and Romans* that played a decisive role in the shaping of his Roman plays. The Elizabethan *Julius Caesar* (performed probably at the opening of the Globe theatre in 1599), and the Jacobean *Antony and Cleopatra* (c. 1606–1607) and *Coriolanus* (c. 1605–1610) are almost exclusively based on the *Lives*, while numerous other plays have been thematically influenced by the Plutarchan canon or include references to specific works.

Although modern scholarship generally recognises Shakespeare's knowledge of Latin (ultimately grounded in the playwright's grammar school education, which included canonical texts in its curriculum) as well as French and Italian,<sup>1</sup> it is widely accepted that he used Sir Thomas North's translation of the Plutarch's *Lives*. Ubiquitously dubbed "Shakespeare's Plutarch", its first edition in the English vernacular appeared in 1579 and was followed by expanded editions in 1595 and 1603. North translated the *Lives* from the French version of Jacques Amyot, published in 1559 (see Frazier-Guerrier and Lucchesi in this volume). Shakespeare was also acquainted with the *Moralia*, possibly in its first English translation by Philemon Holland published in 1603, although a version entered in the Stationers Register in 1600 allows for a possible influence on Shakespeare's earlier works.<sup>2</sup>

Shakespeare's borrowings should be seen in the light of the fact that Plutarch's *Lives* were admired in early modern England for their profound interest in the complexities of the human character and their didactic significance. This is attested by a passage in North's dedication of the translation to Queen Elizabeth: "I hope that the common sort of your subjects, shall not only profit themselves hereby, but also be animated to the better service of your majesty" (1598: 2). There is no other book, North continues, that teaches so well "honour, love, obedience, reverence, zeal and devotion to Princes" (*ibid.*). Also of great importance for the appeal of Plutarch's *Lives* was the implementation of pagan teachings into the Christian culture of the English Renaissance. However, North's choice of words, influenced by Christian concepts and

<sup>1</sup> On Shakespeare's education, see Kermode (1999), Muir (1977: 1–13); Martindale (1990).

<sup>2</sup> Evans (2001: 3); see also Gillespie (2004: 427).

imagery, demonstrates how this process could also introduce connotations of religious antagonism in protestant England: in his rendition, Caesar's title *pontifex maximus* (high priest) becomes "chief bishop of Rome", an uneasy allusion to the papal institution.

The fact that Plutarch's *Lives* readily lend themselves to dramatic interpretation is an added value which ensured their popularity with dramatists. A much-quoted passage from the *Alexander* signals Plutarch's intention to construct a full-bodied depiction of personalities based not only on specific achievements but also on details which exemplify their intrinsic qualities: "oftentimes a light occasion, a word, or some sport makes men's natural dispositions and manners appear more plain, than the famous battles won" [1 (1)].<sup>3</sup> Shakespeare sensed the dramatic potential of Plutarch's desire to probe beneath the surface of historical fame or notoriety.<sup>4</sup> The resulting felicitous combination of didactics and artistic representation not only reflected contemporary debates about what constitutes good governance but also superbly channeled the Aristotelian feelings of pity and fear, triggered by the intricate dissection of human glory and downfall.

In an illuminating essay, Gary Miles argues that Shakespeare, under the influence of North's translation, misinterprets (although not necessarily to a negative effect) the Roman idea of human character as revealed and defined by public action. Instead, he defines character by internal tribulations which then, in turn, may have consequences for society. Taking the depiction of Brutus as an example, Miles demonstrates that North (via Amyot) reformulates the meaning of "noble" from the original "well-born" into the internal quality familiar to Shakespeare and to the modern reader.<sup>5</sup> This pattern of internalisation marks the most significant direction in which Shakespeare develops the Plutarchan material. Therefore, in this chapter, I consider Shakespeare's creative relationship with Plutarch in *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus* with a specific focus on the two conflicts intrinsic to Shakespeare's Roman protagonists: (1) their internal contradictions of character, including volatility of spirit

<sup>3</sup> All quotations are taken from Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives*. References are to page numbers of the 1899 edition, followed by the modern section-divisions in brackets.

<sup>4</sup> Thomson (1952: 243) suggests that Plutarch was "the channel or medium of the Greek tragic spirit" for Shakespeare, a claim that has been supported and treated extensively by Pelling (2009). Traversi (1963: 14–15) points out that in appropriating conflicting notions of fascination and mistrust Shakespeare was influenced by Plutarch who saw greatness contrasting with human frailty and a lack of true self-knowledge; Bullough puts the stress on the similarities between Shakespeare's concept of the "the union of opposites" and Plutarch's interest in the "diversity of motives warring in the same man" (1966a: 251).

<sup>5</sup> Miles (1989: 282).

or emotional excess; (2) their violent interaction with the dominant society, resulting in a tragic denouement. I explore key aspects of the main characters and the dramaturgical structure of the plays, and consider how Shakespeare shapes these two interlinked conflicts by omitting or amplifying specific elements of the source material he consulted in North's translation. The discussion of the Roman plays is preceded by a brief outline of the major strands of Plutarch's more oblique influence on other plays aimed to shed some light on the scale of impact of Plutarch on the entire Shakespearean canon.

## 1 Non-Roman Plays

The influence of Plutarch's *Alexander* on Shakespeare's portrayal of Henry V is attested in the play by the comic Welsh captain Fluellen's comparison between Henry and Alexander the Great (4.7). Fluellen compares Alexander's murder of his friend Cleitus with Henry's estrangement of Falstaff. The comparison is to the young prince's advantage, because, unlike Alexander, Harry acted not while "being in his ales and his cups" but "in his right wits and good judgments" (4.7.37–8). Judith Mossman draws parallels between the battle of Agincourt and Plutarch's description of the battle of Gaugamela: similar details intensify the feeling of suspense during the night before the battle, including the proximity of the two armies and the isolation of the leaders, who are either engaged in rituals (Alexander) or patrolling the camp in disguise (Henry).<sup>6</sup> However, the difference between Alexander's certainty and Henry's more self-conscious conduct, embodying the humility expected of a Christian prince, points to Shakespeare's skill in adapting the character traits of Plutarchan heroes to suit the needs of a Christian society.<sup>7</sup>

Certain structural influences of the *Life of Cato* on *Othello* have also been suggested. According to Plutarch, during his commission in Cyprus, Cato favoured Canidius, whose reputation was spotless, over his old friend Munatius. In consequence, the latter bore Cato a grudge. This, as Wallace Graves recognises, bears very close resemblance to the triangle of foiled friendship and competition of Othello – Iago – Cassio.<sup>8</sup>

6 Mossman (1994: 68).

7 A link between the depiction of Prince Hal/Henry V and Plutarch's *Life of Alcibiades*, based on parallels between Alcibiades' tactics at conquering Selybrea and Henry's siege of Harfleur, has been suggested by Grace (1999: 377).

8 Graves (1973: 186). Iago's malice and anger at the general whose favour he thinks he deserves and at Cassio who, in his eyes, deprived him of his rightful position, have been related by Robert Evans to material in the Plutarchan essay *On friends and flatterers* included in

The influence of *Marcus Brutus* on *The Merchant of Venice* and *Henry IV* is considered by John Velz in relation to the character of Portia (Porcia in Plutarch). In Plutarch's narrative, Porcia, a woman famed for her intelligence and devotion, reproaches Brutus for his unwillingness to trust his secrets to her: "the daughter of Cato, was married unto thee, not to be thy bedfellow and companion in bed and at board only, like a harlot, but to be partaker also with thee, of thy good and evil fortune" [257 (13)]. Then, revealing a self-inflicted wound the pain from which she bears in secret, she evokes his admiration and convinces him to share his thoughts. This is intricately dramatised in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* with a dialogue affirming the strength of the bond between husband and wife (2.1). Velz detects similar emotional tension in Shakespeare's depiction of Portia and Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice* (3.2). The bliss of the couple anticipating their wedding is disrupted by the news of Bassanio's friend Antonio who has lost his fortunes at sea. In both cases, Velz claims, "a woman sees the outside world impinge on, indeed threaten, her marriage".<sup>9</sup> Velz extends the parallels to *Henry IV* Part 1 (2.3): Kate, in her insistence to learn the reason why her husband Hotspur neglects her, appeals to his loss of appetite, absent-mindedness and paleness, "symptoms" similar to those of Brutus.

*Timon of Athens* is the non-Roman play most strongly associated with Plutarch's *Lives* with the accounts of Timon in the *Lives of Antony* and *Alcibiades* furnishing the play with its key narrative points.<sup>10</sup> Driven to misanthropy by his false friends, Timon rejects society as a whole and Shakespeare reinforces the bitterness of Plutarch's character by emphasising his determination to spread vice and war.<sup>11</sup> In this he cooperates with Alcibiades, who, also driven away from Athens and set on revenge, meets Timon in the wilderness, where the latter has retired, and does not hesitate to march against Athens to avenge him. Although Plutarch's more versatile Alcibiades is reduced to a rather two-dimensional character of a military man, a more favourable assessment of his presence in the play is encouraged by a notable deviation from Plutarch's

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Holland's translation of the *Moralia*. Nevertheless, Evans warns that the connections remain tentative, since material from Plutarch's essay was included in Sir Thomas Elyot's *The Book Named the Governor*, which was also available to Shakespeare.

<sup>9</sup> Velz (1977–1978: 303–304).

<sup>10</sup> Honigmann (1961) considers influences of the two pairs *Antony* – *Demetrius* and *Alcibiades* – *Coriolanus*: the banquets and gifts of Timon resemble Cleopatra's, while Alcibiades' banishment is possibly modelled on Coriolanus', as both express their support for their soldiers.

<sup>11</sup> Ure (1961: 47) links both Antony and Timon's experiences with flatterers who later desert them to the essay *On friends and flatterers*.

*Alcibiades*: Shakespeare presents Alcibiades' exile as provoked by the Athenian judges' rejection of his defence of a friend and not because, as Plutarch claims, he was accused of sacrilege.

Although, as an unfinished play, *Timon* contains ostensible narrative loose ends, it demonstrates Shakespeare's artistry in infusing various strands of his source material. Moreover, it stands out as an example of his creative response to the essential Plutarchan *leitmotif* of the tension between individual and society which is fully developed in the three plays subject to discussion in the remaining sections of this chapter.

## 2      Julius Caesar

Shakespeare's major sources for *Julius Caesar* are the *Lives of Caesar*, *Brutus* and *Antony*. Additional use of the *Lives of Cato*, *Cicero* and *Pompey* contribute to the intense Plutarchan feel of the play.<sup>12</sup> In his comparison between Brutus and Dion, Plutarch is more favourable to Dion for a number of reasons, including that he acted on his own accord in conquering Syracuse and delivering it from the tyrant Dionysus, unlike Brutus who was instigated by Cassius, and that the anti-Caesareans waged war out of necessity and did not account for the people's love for Caesar, who, unlike Dionysus, had not proved a tyrant. Nevertheless, Brutus is commended for his learning, his kind nature and for famously preferring "the respect of his country and commonwealth, before private affection" [245 (4)]. That said, he is also recognised as embodying a certain "moral and psychological dichotomy",<sup>13</sup> to which Shakespeare responds by emphasising the contrast between Brutus' ideals and the reality he lives in. The soliloquy during the famous orchard scene (2.1) crystallises Brutus' self-conviction that Caesar's rule is a potential tyranny. By internalising the process of Brutus' reasoning regarding the assassination and its moral implications, Shakespeare departs from Plutarch's more pragmatic account of the conspiracy. The *Life of Brutus* describes two occasions revealing Brutus' mindset: when Cassius mentions the planned meeting of the Senate on the Ides, he provokes Brutus to reply that he would not attend but "I mean not to hold my peace, bet to withstand it, and rather die than lose my liberty" [253 (10)]. Later on,

<sup>12</sup> On the use of the *Lives of Cato* and *Cicero*, see Bullough (1966a: 36). Humphreys (1984: 23) notes the importance of the comparison between Brutus and Dion; Honigmann (1959: 29) sees similarities between Marullus' speech about the people's love for Pompey (1.1) and a passage in the *Life of Pompey*, describing Pompey's self-confidence and neglecting Caesar's power [303 (57)].

<sup>13</sup> Simmons (1974: 69).

Plutarch offers us a glimpse of Brutus' torments: "either care did wake him against his will when he would have slept, or else oftentimes of himself he fell into such deep thoughts of this enterprise, casting in his mind all the dangers that might happen" [256 (13)]. Shakespeare gives voice to his protagonist's tormented psyche by focusing on his allegiance, divided between Caesar the person and the vision of the ideal republic. The dramatist problematises the character further by establishing him as the ringleader of the plot: Plutarch praises the conspirators for not taking an oath but the play presents Brutus as specifically responsible for that decision;<sup>14</sup> after the assassination, the unsettling ritualistic scene of the murderers bathing his hands in Caesar's blood is also conducted by Brutus (3.1). The scene, invented by Shakespeare, creates a visually poignant representation of the momentousness but also the cruelty of the act, which is conveyed with less pathos by Plutarch. Shakespeare also notably changes the number of wounds inflicted on Caesar from twenty-three in Plutarch to thirty-three, which Maurice Hunt takes to exemplify an awareness of the legendary association of Julius Caesar and Jesus Christ, furthered by the shared initials and Dante's *Inferno*, in which Cassius and Brutus are placed together with Judas.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, in the second half of the play Shakespeare balances this potentially unfavourable impression with a few effective glimpses of Brutus' kindness and endurance. In the quarrel scene (4.2), Shakespeare reveals in profoundly human terms the emotional bond of friendship between Brutus and Cassius. The scene compiles three different episodes in Plutarch's *Life of Brutus*: Brutus requesting money from Cassius, a counterfeit philosopher bursting in while they are arguing (in Shakespeare the intruder is a poet), and Cassius objecting to the condemnation of Lucius Pella [286–288 (35)]. In order to achieve a fine dramatic effect, Shakespeare amplifies Brutus' obstinacy, while Cassius emerges as more sympathetic. However, when Brutus announces the news of Portia's death, he elicits compassion as his irritation is inevitably perceived in the light of the tragic news he had kept to himself.<sup>16</sup>

Another scene which Shakespeare borrows directly from Plutarch is Brutus' encounter with his evil genius, a premonition of his demise at Philippi.

<sup>14</sup> Bullough (1966a: 41).

<sup>15</sup> "That Shakespeare should have his Julius Caesar stabbed to death at the ninth hour (2.4.23), the hour of the crucifixion, is thus not surprising" (Hunt 2006: 112). Ronald Knowles also points out that "[I]t is important to note the increase rather than decrease in Shakespeare's mind when transposing words from the pages of North to actions performed live on stage before an audience, which are then recollected with a sense of growing enormity" (2002: 103).

<sup>16</sup> Bullough (1966a: 42) and Humphreys (1984: 21).

Shakespeare labels it “ghost of Caesar”, a decision possibly influenced by the anonymous academic play *Caesar’s Revenge* (performed by the students at Oxford in the late 1590s and published in 1607), but also encouraged by the ambiguity rendered by North’s translation (in the *Life of Brutus*, he calls it “Brutus’ evil spirit”, but in the *Life of Caesar* it appears as an “ill angel”).<sup>17</sup> A slight variation in the circumstances of the sinister presence of the apparition is noteworthy: in the *Life of Brutus*, it appears while Brutus is alone, lost in his thoughts on the night before his army crosses from Asia into Europe [289 (36)]; the setting of the episode in the play is similar, but seeks to present Brutus in a more humane light by introducing the interaction between him and Lucius, the servant boy, who plays music and sings. A moment of tenderness when Lucius falls asleep and Brutus takes the instrument from the boy is masterfully contrasted with the appearance of the vengeful ghost (4.2).<sup>18</sup>

In *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare pits Brutus against the dominating reality personified by Caesar and highlights Brutus’ isolation by presenting Caesar’s world as ambivalent enough to destabilize Brutus’ agenda and eventually to render his actions futile. This dramaturgical approach is inspired by Plutarch’s assessment of his characters, which often discourages a one-sided view. Caesar’s hubris and ambition are seen as flaws but his significance as a political and military leader is not disputed; his physical infirmities are matched by his fortitude and rigorous training in endurance. Plutarch writes that Caesar “yielded not to the disease of his body ... but contrarily, took the pains of war, as a medicine to cure his sick body fighting always with his disease, travelling continually, living soberly, and commonly lying abroad in the field” [141 (17)]. The fact that, in the play, Caesar is only seen in a few brief scenes contributes to the impression that his image is largely a construct of the other characters and this is evident in the somewhat deceptive embellishment of Caesar’s weakness: his falling sickness is reported by Casca, who describes a fit following Caesar’s refusal of the crown at the Lupercalia (a version of the incident taken from the *Life of Antony*, since in the *Life of Caesar* it happens during an assembly); also, in a divergence from Plutarch, Cassius tells an invented story of Caesar’s inability to swim revealed during an alleged swimming contest between the two (1.2).

Shakespeare creates an aura of menace around Caesar only to render it immaterial as the action of the play progresses. He interpolates Casca’s account

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<sup>17</sup> According to Christopher Pelling, in Plutarch the *daimon* of Caesar introduces himself as the evil *daimon* of Brutus; yet, Pelling contends that it is remarkable that Shakespeare and Plutarch merge the two apparitions in a similar way (2009: 271–272).

<sup>18</sup> Muir (1977: 118).

of the incident with the two tribunes who had ordered the removal of the diadems placed on Caesar's statues after the Lupercalia; Casca's statement that they have been "put to silence" (1.2.281–283) contrasts with Plutarch's less dramatic account, according to which they are removed from office [201 (61)]. Not only do these reports betray the bias of the anti-Caesareans, but also, since Caesar never performs any act of tyranny, the brutality of the assassination exposes the conspirators as the more dangerous force.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, in contrast with Plutarch's necessarily detailed account, by not mentioning the civil wars, in which Caesar emerged victorious, nor the fact that he was granted the title of perpetual dictator, Shakespeare makes him even less susceptible to accusations of tyranny. When Caesar approaches the Senate on the Ides of March, Artemidorus tries to give him a letter containing vital information about the conspiracy. In the *Life of Caesar*, pressed by the crowd, he is unable to read it [206 (65)]. By having Caesar dismiss the request and respond "What touches us ourself shall be last served" (3.1.8), Shakespeare aims to arouse the audience's sympathy for him as the moment of murder approaches.<sup>20</sup>

In the second half of the play Brutus faces the bitter truth that Rome is not receptive to his anti-tyrant stance. Ominously, this is indicated at beginning of the play when we hear from Cassius that he has forged letters "as if they came from several citizens" (1.2.314) addressed to Brutus encouraging him to resurrect the old republic; in the *Life of Brutus* the letters are genuine and emanate from ordinary citizens: "But for Brutus, his friends and countrymen, both by divers procurements, and sundry rumours of the city, and by many bills also, did openly call and procure him to do that he did" [252 (9)]. Later, the people's seemingly positive response to Brutus' speech, culminating in their exclamation "let him be Caesar" (3.2.49) speaks volumes about how remote from the reality of the situation Brutus' rhetoric really is. As the crowd is driven to frenzy by Antony, Brutus and Cassius flee the city, their physical displacement confirming their alienation from the world of Caesar. In the events leading up to the battle at Philippi, Shakespeare contrasts the stability of the dominant system against its flawed opposition by choosing to emphasise the conflict between Brutus and Cassius in the above-mentioned quarrel scene, while playing down the rivalry and hostility between Octavian and Antony – which he saves for his sequel play – described in the *Life of Antony*.

As Shakespeare conflates events for obvious dramaturgical purposes, the high-paced conspiracy leads to an equally swift victory for the Caesareans. Closing the play with Antony's eulogy for Brutus, Shakespeare remains truthful

<sup>19</sup> Knowles (2002: 114).

<sup>20</sup> Muir (1977: 118).

to the protagonist's overall positive evaluation by Plutarch; nevertheless, he infuses the play with darker undertones by focusing on Brutus' isolation and inability to fully comprehend the political mechanisms of the Caesarean reality. The tragedy arises from the fact that by opposing a world of potential tyranny Brutus paves the way for the establishment of an even more powerful system which annihilates him. Thus, far from being a decisively anti-republican play, *Julius Caesar* nevertheless reflects profound issues of the values of monarchy and autocracy, and the dangers of regicide. Specific topical insertions bring home the moral abstraction of the play – such is the invented scene in which Caesar asks Antonius, who is running the Lupercalia race, to touch Calphurnia “for our elders say,/the barren, touched in his holy chase,/ shake off their sterile curse” (1.2.7–9). This seems to have a direct bearing on the vexed question of the ageing Queen Elizabeth’s succession and demonstrates how effectively Shakespeare built on Plutarch’s narrative to dramatise current concerns.

### 3      *Antony and Cleopatra*

*Antony and Cleopatra* is almost exclusively based on Plutarch’s *Life of Antony*. Ernst Honigmann suggests Shakespeare was also familiar with the *Comparison of Demetrius and Antony* and draws a parallel between Plutarch’s remark that Cleopatra often unarmed Antony [121 (3)] and the scene in the play in which Cleopatra helps Antony to put on his armour (4.4).<sup>21</sup> Michael Lloyd argues that Shakespeare consulted Plutarch’s essay *On Isis and Osiris* in the *Moralia* for the description of Cleopatra as Isis (3.6).<sup>22</sup>

Plutarch’s moralistic view presents Antony’s relationship with Cleopatra as an illustration of how, despite his military talent and popularity, a man can lose his standing because of emotional obsession. Shakespeare introduces a reverse dynamic in the portrayal of Antony: he is first seen in a negative light through the eyes of the other characters, but is eventually elevated by the tragic denouement.<sup>23</sup> However, while Plutarch’s Antony hardly regrets or assesses his relationship, Shakespeare makes Antony’s life a balancing act between mind and heart. When Antony tells Enobarbus “Would I had never seen her” (1.2.151), he introduces the audience to the profound internal conflict intrinsic to his relationship. Later, when he begins to doubt Cleopatra’s political and personal fidelity, his fury notably combines accusation and self-reproach. The

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<sup>21</sup> Honigmann (1959: 27).

<sup>22</sup> Lloyd (1959). This connection is also explored by Bono (1984: 191–213).

<sup>23</sup> Logan (2005: 160); see also Beauchamp (1955: 114).

critical moments of the aftermath of Actium and the desertion of the fleet not only fuel Antony's suspicion of Cleopatra, but also expose an underlying feeling of isolation. Plutarch illustrates this internal torment with Antony's voluntary exile and his (temporary) resolution to live on the sea shore in the vein of Timon of Athens. According to Cynthia Marshall, Shakespeare's depiction of Antony as a man experiencing an internal conflict is rooted in Plutarch's idea that Antony, like any lover, is "not his own man" [91 (66)].<sup>24</sup> This is attested by Antony's sorrowful lines after the fateful retreat of Cleopatra's ships at Actium:

CLEOPATRA. O my lord, my lord,  
forgive my fearful sails! I little thought  
you would have followed.  
ANTONY. Egypt, thou knew'st too well  
my heart was to thy rudder tied by th' strings,  
and thou shouldst tow me after.

3.11.53–57

Plutarch suggests that Cleopatra planned to escape to safety from the onset of the battle: "considering with her self how she might fly and provide for her safety, not to help him to win the victory, but to fly more easily after the battell lost" [87 (63)]. By presenting the situation as an unfortunate misunderstanding, Shakespeare emphasises Antony's lack of rational judgment but also invites the audience to look more favourably upon the Egyptian queen.

Plutarch writes about Cleopatra: "And besides her beauty, the good grace she had to talk and discourse, her courteous nature that tempered her words and deeds, was a spur that pricked to the quick" [35 (27)]. Accordingly, Shakespeare depicts a multi-layered character, fusing a mercurial nature with deep affection and royal dignity. He incorporates some details of the couple's pastimes described by Plutarch, which add more zest to her relationship with Antony: Antony suggests they wander the streets (1.1) and Charmian remembers how Cleopatra played a practical joke on Antony by putting a salted fish on his fishing rod (2.5). Furthermore, Shakespeare significantly enriches the character of Cleopatra by developing her comic aura: the scenes in which she violently attacks the messenger bringing her the news of Antony's marriage to Octavia and, subsequently, his description of Octavia's appearance have no analogue in Plutarch and epitomise the queen's quick temper but also her relentless readiness to defend her love. Cleopatra's insistence on receiving a description of Octavia (2.5) stands out among the more general allusions to Elizabeth I's

<sup>24</sup> Marshall (1993: 387).

personality and behaviour by mirroring the Queen's inquiry over the appearance of Mary Queen of Scots when it was suggested that the latter would marry Leicester who was Elizabeth's favourite.<sup>25</sup>

Plutarch's depiction of Cleopatra as an important, albeit perilous, factor in Antony's life, and the contrast between the couple's sumptuous life in Alexandria and the *Realpolitik* of Octavian provides Shakespeare with the groundwork for an essential polarisation. The wider timeframe of the *Life of Antony* shifts the focus between Antony's equally important engagements in both Egypt and Rome. Shakespeare seeks a more clear-cut division of values and to present the love story in a more positive light; therefore, he omits various details from Plutarch's account which might cast doubts on Antony's Alexandrian allegiance. His ties with Rome in the play are contingent and relate to the past, not the present or the future. The relationships with Fulvia and Octavia feel distinctively short-lived in comparison with the overwhelming presence of Cleopatra. When Antony goes to Rome, Shakespeare ensures that Cleopatra remains a palpable presence both for the audience and the characters of the play. The scenes of political manoeuvring are intersected with Alexandrian imagery: Enobarbus' description of the first meeting between Antony and the queen, closely following Plutarch but furnished with magnificent poetic ornament,<sup>26</sup> Cleopatra's passionate longing for news from Antony and later, her equally passionate scene with the messenger bringing the news of Antony's marriage (2.6).

Another notable omission is Antony's expedition in Asia which Plutarch narrates in detail. The Parthian campaign, although far from flawless, nevertheless repositions Antony back in his role as a member of the triumvirate and on a par with Octavian. Shakespeare, however, aims to alienate Antony from his Roman life and, accordingly, reduces the entire Parthian campaign to a single scene of Ventidius' victorious procession in Syria (3.1). (This is an important episode, because, as Antonius' chief general, he also receives credit for the victory against the Parthians, thus (unintentionally) overshadowing Antony.) Significantly, Antony's only military activity in the play is conducted in opposition to Rome: the retreat at Actium, followed by a successful assault, offering a brief and doomed respite and, finally, the ultimate defeat. The tragic peak of Actium is built around various details described by Plutarch, including the inadequate preparations for the battle, the untrained mariners and the heavy ships of the Egyptian fleet. Shakespeare does not describe how valiantly the

<sup>25</sup> Hopkins (2008: 101); see also Morris (1969).

<sup>26</sup> Muir (1977: 223).

fleet fought for Antony, thus making the play focus on the personal defeat.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, Shakespeare places the desertion of Enobarbus after Actium to add poignancy to the act (in Plutarch, the “prototype” of Enobarbus, Domitius, leaves Antony earlier [86–87 (63)]. The moment when Antony is betrayed by the fleet stands out as a fine dramatisation of Plutarch’s equally intense episode in which Antony, overlooking the sea, sees how the Egyptian fleet joins the enemy and together they advance against Alexandria [104 (76)].

In the face of defeat, Plutarch’s Antony chooses the soldier’s way to die. However, the manner of his suicide is flawed: his servant Eros, instead of killing his master, kills himself; Antony falls upon his sword but, although mortally wounded, dies in Cleopatra’s arms only after he has been laboriously hoisted to her monument by the Queen and her handmaidens [105–106 (77)]. Moreover, the fact that the true reason that pushes him towards death is the thought that Cleopatra is dead, further distances Antony from the Roman military ideal and positions him firmly on the Egyptian side. Shakespeare, however, does not reproach Antony for his behaviour, but relishes the power of Plutarch’s text to create scenes of emotional intensity. It is important that in the *Life of Antony* Plutarch dedicates a substantial section to Cleopatra’s fate after Antony’s death: her encounter with Octavian and her spectacular suicide (Plutarch lists a few versions, but both Octavian in his triumphal placard and Shakespeare preferred the asp bite). As Ronald Knowles rightly points out, by emphasising her resolve to die instead of allowing to be taken to Rome, Plutarch’s habitual moralism gives way to an acclamation of romantic love.<sup>28</sup> By endorsing the less critical attitude of Plutarch, Shakespeare depicts Cleopatra’s suicide as a poignant act of defiance and sincere affection.

That the association between Cleopatra and Elizabeth was an uncanny one is best attested by Fulke Grenville who allegedly burned the manuscript of a play he wrote about Cleopatra out of fear that the lovers might resemble Elizabeth and Essex.<sup>29</sup> Drawing on the parallels Cleopatra-Elizabeth I and Octavian-James I, who embraced the classical ideals and imagery, Lisa Hopkins argues that the play ultimately reflects “highly charged contemporary debates about national identities and the protocols and psychological cost of the political merger between England and Scotland”.<sup>30</sup> The dominant reality of Octavian prevails, but the tragic deliverance of the protagonists in Plutarch, and even more so in Shakespeare, exemplifies them as incapable of

<sup>27</sup> Bulloough (1966a: 243).

<sup>28</sup> Knowles (2002: 125–126).

<sup>29</sup> Cox Jensen (2012: 165).

<sup>30</sup> Hopkins (2008: 103).

conformity. A possible allusion to James I's ascent to the throne of England would have introduced a whole new dimension to the deaths of Antony and Cleopatra by which Shakespeare elevates their Egyptian way of life not only as fundamentally different to Rome but also as emotionally superior.

#### 4      *Coriolanus*

In his *Life of Coriolanus*, Plutarch describes Gaius Marius as a successful soldier, but one who is prone to wrath and excessive pride: "he was so choleric and impatient, that he would yield to no living creature: which made him churlish, uncivil, and altogether unfit for any man's conversation" [2 (1)]. His unwavering senatorial bias and opposition to plebeian benefits cost him the supreme power and lead to his banishment. Possessed by desire for revenge, he becomes an ally of the enemy he has conquered before, a decision which brings his demise. Shakespeare makes full and detailed use of the *Life of Coriolanus* and this is attested by close textual parallels. In relation to Coriolanus' arrival at the Volscian camp and his plea to be given an office, Geoffrey Bullough finds traces of the *Life of Agesilaus*, particularly in an episode in which Agesilaus offered Lysander to be his meat-carver [167 (8)].<sup>31</sup> More recently, Bridget Escolme argues for the importance of the Plutarchan essay *On the control of anger* in Holland's translation of *Moralia*, and finds echoes of the essay in the play which are especially conspicuous in Menenius' advice to Coriolanus to behave "mildly".<sup>32</sup>

Shakespeare dramatises the theme of setting the individual against the state, intrinsic to Plutarch's narrative, by elaborating on Coriolanus' perilous emotional and social isolation caused by his wrathful and disdainful temperament. Therefore, he interprets Plutarch's account of the political calamities in Rome as intrinsically related to the protagonist's personality with Coriolanus' confrontation with the Roman people and his arrogant refusal to show humility emerging as the true cause of his downfall. Accordingly, the play puts heavy emphasis on Coriolanus' canvassing for elections, while Plutarch only states that on the election day he appeared with pomp and senatorial support which had a negative effect [22 (15)].

Shakespeare's treatment of the account of the victory at Corioli is an apt illustration of the defining combination of valour and disregard for human life, central to the character of Coriolanus. Although he is offered a large portion

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<sup>31</sup> Bullough (1966a).

<sup>32</sup> Muir (1977: 249–251); Honigmann (1959: 28–29); Escolme (2014: 18–21; 23–25).

of the loot, in Plutarch's narrative Coriolanus accepts only one horse and requests the release of a captured Volscian, whom he describes as an old friend [14–15 (10)]. This easily reads as indicative of Coriolanus' noble intentions. Shakespeare's Coriolanus is unable to remember the man's name (1.10), the matter is brushed aside and, as we never hear about the prisoner again, it is easy to detect a hint of hypocrisy in the nonchalance of Coriolanus' request.<sup>33</sup> Coriolanus' rejection of booty appears even more superficial bearing in mind his hostility toward the populace.

At the same time, Shakespeare also makes clear that the protagonist's patrician pride is skilfully exploited by the tribunes. Plutarch mentions Brutus and Sicinius as the first men to serve as tribunes of the plebs [9 (7)]; they play a crucial role for the promoting of the civil unrest which brings about Coriolanus' death sentence, eventually replaced with banishment. By highlighting Brutus and Sicinius' [sic] function as agents provocateurs, who stir Marcius and the plebeians against one another, Shakespeare gives us an insider look at the political machinations Coriolanus becomes involved in. When Coriolanus wishes to change his "gown of humility" after talking to the people and says "that I'll straight do; and, knowing myself again, repair to the Senate-House" (2.3.143–144), Shakespeare exposes the political role-playing and encourages the audience to perceive Coriolanus' unwillingness to participate in the political game of Rome as an oblique rebuke of demagoguery. His sarcasm and arrogance target the commoners as well as the politicians who pull the strings. Shakespeare deftly builds up the dramatic tension caused by Coriolanus' anger to the point when it becomes an act of open aggression; as he is forced to go into exile, his reaction to the banishment is also characteristically more openly vitriolic compared to the seemingly calm the composed conduct described by Plutarch. However, as usual, the basis of the emotional reaction is to be found in Plutarch, who writes that Coriolanus "did outwardly show no manner of passion, nor care at all of himself", but this is "because he was so carried away with the vehemency of anger, and desire of revenge, that he had no sense nor feeling of the hard state he was in" [33 (21)].

Characteristically, the political aspects of the alliance between Coriolanus and his arch-enemy Aufidius, evident in Plutarch, are re-visited by Shakespeare to depict a connection deeply embedded in the narrative. The relationship is made more full-bodied by the introduction of the Volscian general at a much earlier stage: in Plutarch, he is mentioned for the first time when Coriolanus is exiled and is plotting his revenge, while in Shakespeare he appears as early as Act One as the general defeated at Corioli, thus giving more substance to

<sup>33</sup> Melchiori (2009: 197–199); Poole (1988: 28–29).

"the marvellous private hate" between the two warriors, described by Plutarch [34 (22)]. Their rivalry and mutual hatred are strong enough to become an emotional bond verging on camaraderie – Aufidius offers Coriolanus a much warmer welcome in Shakespeare than in Plutarch. His growing hostility is distinctively driven by personal jealousy of Coriolanus' valour and eminence; it signals the dubious integrity of such an alliance and emphasises Coriolanus' alienation from the Volscians. After he gives in to his mother's pleas not to attack Rome, in an almost *déjà vu* situation, Coriolanus faces the populace again. The assembly of the Volscians, incited by his nemesis, proclaims him a traitor. Plutarch writes that Coriolanus is killed before he is given the chance to speak at the assembly [61 (39)]; anticipating the murder, Shakespeare's Coriolanus characteristically provokes the already sceptical Volscians even further by boasting how he defeated them (5.6.112–117).

Plutarch mentions that Coriolanus lost his father early in life and his mother Volumnia encouraged his military career, but her appearance is limited to her role as an envoy persuading him not to attack Rome as an act of revenge. Shakespeare introduces a prominent female trio – Volumnia, Coriolanus' wife Virgilia and the lady Valeria – and throughout the play he emphasises Volumnia's active influence on Coriolanus as an adult, thus creating a subtext of complex and problematic relationship intrinsically and fatally related to his martial virtues. The scene in which Volumnia convinces Coriolanus not to attack Rome retains its importance and is constructed as the emotional crescendo of the play. Adrian Poole notes that Shakespeare transforms the gesture he finds in Plutarch: "[A]nd holding mother her hard by the right hand, Oh mother, said he, you have won a happy victory for your country, but mortal and unhappy for your son: for I see my self vanquished by you alone" [57 (36)] into the most eloquent of stage-directions: "holds her by the hand silent" (5.3.183).<sup>34</sup> According to Kenneth Muir, Plutarch condemns Coriolanus for giving in to his mother's pleas, an act of which "Shakespeare tacitly approves".<sup>35</sup>

Shakespeare does not exonerate Coriolanus' flawed temperament, but by accentuating his personality as unfit to exist within the political scheming in Rome, he creates the tragedy of a man who is existentially alone. Modification of small but significant details contributes to the sense of Coriolanus' self-isolation: pursuing the retreating Volscians, Plutarch's Coriolanus enters the city of Corioli accompanied by other soldiers; later, he goes into exile with a few companions. In the play, he performs these acts entirely on his own. Seemingly underpinning his bravery and individualism, Shakespeare in fact

<sup>34</sup> Poole (1988: 110–111).

<sup>35</sup> Muir (1977: 251).

underlines his inability to cooperate with others and to be reconciled with society.<sup>36</sup> True to his nature, when he leaves Rome, Coriolanus exclaims "I banish you" (3.3.124) and concludes his speech with "There is a world elsewhere" (136) – a statement infused with deep irony since Coriolanus is doomed to remain outside of both worlds.

As the only dramatist to write a play about Coriolanus, Shakespeare clearly saw in Plutarch's depiction the power of a potent and appealing tragic narrative. Geoffrey Bullough relates the dearth of corn and the opposition between Menenius and the citizens in *Coriolanus* (1.1) to events in 1607–1608, when a rebellion in Warwickshire and Leicestershire against the high prices of food was put down by the gentry.<sup>37</sup> Issues of James I's absolutism and self-absorbed theatricality impinge on the interpretation of Coriolanus' rigid sense of personal honour and hollow personality,<sup>38</sup> while the tension between the plebeians and the patricians can be seen to reflect contemporary concerns about the voice of the body politic.

The internal conflicts intrinsic to the human character and, on an external level, the tragic opposition of the individual against a dominating socio-political system are fundamental tropes which Shakespeare successfully integrated into the dramaturgy of his Roman plays. Moreover, his interest in issues of kingship and individual greatness and fall, influenced by Plutarch, is also indicative of an active engagement with various disconcerting political and social events to which his plays are often seen to allude. The popularity of the performative medium ensured the active reception of the safely "detached" yet profoundly topical classical narratives across the social strata. Notably, the fact that topical allusions are often contained in scenes invented by Shakespeare points to the dramatist's ability to introduce a recognisable layer of interpretation, ensuring an organic connection between the Roman plays and seventeenth-century England. In this way, the dramatic medium provides Plutarch's characters and narratives with a new channel of reception reaching beyond the literary into the more visceral and popular area of performance.

<sup>36</sup> Bullough (1966a: 16–17); on Coriolanus' solitude, especially in comparison with Antony's, see Dillon (1979: 337).

<sup>37</sup> Bullough (1966a: 456–460).

<sup>38</sup> Goldberg (1989: 192–193).

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## PART 5

### *Enlightenment and the Modern Age*

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## Plutarch from Voltaire to Stendhal

*Francesco Manzini*

The French sixteenth century saw a great surge in interest in both Plutarch's *Parallel lives* and the *Moralia*, at once reflected in and stimulated by Jacques Amyot's landmark vernacular translations (*Les Vies des hommes illustres* [1559] and the *Oeuvres morales et meslées de Plutarque* [1572]). It is hardly surprising that the French Renaissance should have seen such a spike in Plutarch's popularity, nor that a large measure of this popularity should have been sustained over the course of the seventeenth century. Equally, one might expect this interest to have started to dwindle by the turn of the eighteenth century – particularly once the “Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes” [the “Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns”] finally resolved itself largely in favour of the “Moderns” – and for it then to have faded almost entirely over the course of Voltaire's French Enlightenment. Instead, the Enlightenment allowed itself to be redirected by Rousseau to produce a second, if anything even greater peak of French interest in Plutarch's *Parallel lives*, and it was not in fact until modernity was ushered in by the second fall of Napoleon in 1815 that Plutarch's cultural significance can be said to have started definitively to wane in France. This chapter covers Plutarch's French reception from the end of “le Grand Siècle”, the long seventeenth century that ended in 1715 with the death of Louis XIV, to the end of the long eighteenth century that ended in 1815.<sup>1</sup> It concludes by looking at Stendhal's singular and anachronistic reception of Plutarch at the start of France's displaced nineteenth century, the Bourgeois century that started in 1815 and ended in 1914,<sup>2</sup> or 1944, or even 1968.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, the “Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes” generated a lengthy debate about the lingering or possibly even perennial primacy of classical cultural models. On the side of the “Ancients”, we find not only Boileau, Lafontaine, and La Bruyère, but also André and Anne Dacier: André Dacier would eventually go on to produce a new translation of the *Parallel lives* (*Les Vies des hommes illustres de Plutarque*, 1721–1734).<sup>3</sup> On

<sup>1</sup> Stendhal uses the preface to his first novel, *Armance*, explicitly to state that the nineteenth century began only in 1815. See Stendhal, ed. Ansel *et al.* (2005–2013: 1, 86).

<sup>2</sup> See Magraw (1983) for an example of such a periodisation.

<sup>3</sup> A first volume had in fact appeared in 1694.

the side of the Moderns, we principally find Charles Perrault and Fontenelle. The dispute appeared to resolve itself in 1700 when Boileau wrote to Perrault conceding Modern parity with the “Ancients”, thereby leaving the way clear for a more general cultural renewal in the new century. This finally came after the death of Louis XIV: the subsequent Regency (1715–1723) notoriously produced a relaxation of social and political constraints. It also saw a perceived renewal of French tragedy thanks to the precocious rise of Voltaire. His *Oedipe* (1718) marked the beginning of a brilliant dramaturgical and literary career; the incendiary publication of his *Lettres philosophiques* (1734) marked the beginning of an equally brilliant career as a public intellectual, part polemicist and part “philosophe”. Just as Montesquieu’s *Lettres persanes* (1721) had sought to question French mores from a “Persian” perspective, so Voltaire’s *Lettres philosophiques* held France up to the standards not of classical antiquity but of England: Plutarch appeared to be on the way out, Newton and Locke were now on their way in.<sup>4</sup>

Voltaire aimed to renew a variety of genres and disciplines, including history. Charles Rollin’s popular *Histoire ancienne* (1730–1738) – and his unfinished *Histoire romaine*, eventually completed by his pupil, Jean-Baptiste Crévier (1738–1748) – had explicitly followed Plutarch in presenting ancient history as a compendium of the biographies of its great men.<sup>5</sup> Rollin had also insisted on the need for a new translation of Plutarch to replace “le vieux Gaulois d’Amyot” [“the old Gaulish of Amyot”] and engage eighteenth-century readers<sup>6</sup> – a need of course then in the process of being met by the piecemeal publication of Dacier’s version. Voltaire, however, was of a quite different opinion. In *Le Siècle de Louis XIV* (1751), he argues that history should be considered distinct from mere biography, the latter genre being founded on speculation and gossip in the form of anecdote: “anecdotes are a restricted field from which the vast harvest of history is then gathered; they are petty gossip; they interest the public when they relate to great historical figures”.<sup>7</sup> Plutarch comes in for particular criticism as the arch exponent of such biography:

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<sup>4</sup> There are three main accounts of Plutarch’s *Nachleben* in France: Blignières (1851), Hirzel (1912: 122–199) and Aulotte (1965: 253–273). In addition, I have already covered this ground in Manzini (2004: 26–57). This chapter will, inevitably, follow the main lines of my existing argument quite closely and offer many of the same textual examples, central as they are to my understanding of the trajectory of Plutarch’s reception in the French eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

<sup>5</sup> See Rollin (1730–1738: i, ii).

<sup>6</sup> See Rollin (1730–1738: XII, 219).

<sup>7</sup> See Voltaire, ed. Pomeau (1957: 889). All translations are my own.

Plutarch's *Parallel lives* are a collection of anecdotes more pleasant than reliable: how could he have obtained reliable information about the private lives of Theseus and Lycurgus? Most of the maxims he places in the mouths of his heroes possess more moral utility than they do historical truth.... We can no longer afford to imitate Plutarch in our own day and age.... We only accept historical truths if they are certain.<sup>8</sup>

Voltaire is here categorical: Enlightenment historiography needed to make a clean break with the moralising example offered by Plutarch (and by extension Rollin). This view was challenged to a certain extent by d'Alembert in his *Réflexions sur l'histoire* (1761), written around the same time as Voltaire's article "Histoire" eventually published in the relevant volume of d'Alembert and Diderot's *Encyclopédie* in 1765. Plutarch's rehabilitation in the second half of the eighteenth century was due, however, not to d'Alembert but to Rousseau. In his *Emile* (1762), a novel to some extent influenced by Plutarch's pedagogical ideas, Rousseau implicitly rejects Voltaire's criticisms of Plutarch as he discusses the rival merits of history and biography:

... History shows us actions much more than it shows us personalities, for it only shows us its protagonists at certain select moments, in all their finery; it only exposes the public man who has arranged his appearance in order to be seen a certain way; it does not follow him back to his house, his private quarters, his family, the company of his friends; it does not portray him other than when he is posing: it paints his attire much more than his personality.

I would prefer to read Lives in order to begin to study the human heart; for then it is vain for the man to try to hide, the historian follows him everywhere; he offers him no respite, no hiding place from the penetrating gaze of the onlooker, and it is when the subject thinks he is most effectively hiding that the biographer best reveals him. "Those who write Lives", says Montaigne, "concerning themselves more as they do with conversations than with events, more with what comes from within than with what shows on the outside, these are more my kind of people: this is why, in every respect, Plutarch is my man".<sup>9</sup>

Rousseau goes on to say that he prefers the Lives written by the ancients to those written by modern authors. Nevertheless, Rousseau echoes Rollin's

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<sup>8</sup> See Voltaire, ed. Pomeau (1957: 889).

<sup>9</sup> See Rousseau, ed. Launay (1966: 312).

earlier call for a Life of Turenne, himself recounting an illustrative episode that ‘Plutarch would not have neglected to include’<sup>10</sup> in order the better to make his case. Rousseau offers the following analysis of Plutarch’s use of anecdote:

Plutarch excels in those very details that we no longer dare to go into. He possesses an inimitable grace when showing us great men in little things; and he is so sure in his touch that often a word, a smile, a gesture is enough for him to characterise his hero. Hannibal reassures his frightened army with a jest, and gets it to march laughing into the battle which delivered Italy to him; Agesilaus riding on a stick makes me love him for vanquishing the great king; Caesar passing through a poor village and chatting with his friends unconsciously betrays the traitor who claimed he only wanted to be Pompey’s equal. Alexander swallows his draught without a word – it is the finest moment in his life; Aristides writes his own name on a shell and so justifies his name; Philopoemen, his mantle laid to one side, chops firewood in the kitchen of his host. Such is the true art of portraiture. Our personality does not show itself in our features, nor our character in our great deeds; it is through trifles that we show ourselves for what we really are. What is done in public is either too commonplace or too artificial, and modern dignity almost only allows our authors to deal with such matters.<sup>11</sup>

Rousseau’s characteristic privileging of virtue over learning, moral example over historical accuracy, biography over history, produced a decisive shift in Plutarch’s cultural significance.<sup>12</sup> Rousseau’s obsession with virtue, already apparent in the *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* (1750), had in fact been stimulated by his readings of Plutarch, at least if we are to believe the account he himself provides in *Les Confessions* (1764–1770; published posthumously, 1781–1788):

Plutarch above all became my favourite reading. The pleasure I derived from rereading him over and over again cured me a little of my love of novels, and I soon came to prefer Agesilaus, Brutus, and Aristides, to Orondates, Artemenes, and Juba. These interesting readings and the conversations they frequently gave rise to between me and my father, produced that republican spirit and love of liberty, that proud and

<sup>10</sup> See Rousseau, ed. Launay (1966: 314).

<sup>11</sup> See Rousseau, ed. Launay (1966: 313).

<sup>12</sup> See Blum (1986) and Leduc-Fayette (1974).

indomitable cast of mind, which rendered me impatient of constraint or servitude, and has tormented me all my life in the least propitious circumstances. Incessantly preoccupied by Rome and Athens, living, so to speak, alongside their great men, myself born the citizen of a republic and the son of a father whose ruling passion was the love of his country, I was as enthused as he was; I fancied myself a Greek or a Roman, I became the person whose life I read; the tales of fortitude or intrepidity that had so struck me made my eyes and gave my voice strength. One day, while telling the story of Scaevola as we were eating, I terrified my family by stretching out my hand and holding it over a hot chafing dish, to show what he had done.<sup>13</sup>

Rousseau's intense, fanatical childhood identification with Plutarch's heroes to some extent determined the course of his adult intellectual development, which, again if Rousseau is himself to be believed, flowed from a revelation he had while walking to Vincennes to visit his friend Diderot. He includes an account of this revelation in his *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, in the celebrated passage generally referred to as the "Prosopopée de Fabricius" in which an austere Republican charges the inhabitants of Imperial Rome with moral degeneracy. Jean Starobinski has, with good reason, identified this passage as a turning point in modern political history: "modern *denunciatory thought* finds its language, so it would seem, in the revelation of Vincennes" ("la pensée accusatrice moderne découvre son langage, semble-t-il, dans l'illumination de Vincennes").<sup>14</sup> Certainly, much of subsequent denunciatory French Revolutionary and Republican political culture, particularly in the period between 1789 and 1793, was strongly influenced by Rousseau and his own engagement with Plutarch's exemplars. Marx famously remarked that "Camille Desmoulins, Danton, Robespierre, Saint-Just, Napoleon, the heroes as well as the parties and the masses of the old French Revolution, performed the task of their time in Roman costume and with Roman phrases, the task of unchaining and setting up modern *bourgeois* society".<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Lynn Hunt writes that

all of the educated men of the eighteenth century knew something of the classics, but the radical revolutionaries, men such as Camille Desmoulins, Saint-Just, and Robespierre, found in them lessons for instituting a new

<sup>13</sup> See Rousseau, ed. Voisine (1964: 8–9).

<sup>14</sup> See Starobinski (1976: 96) and Blum (1986: 40–43).

<sup>15</sup> See Marx (1954: 11).

order; they “utopianised” classical history into the model of a new, innocent society, an ideal Republic.<sup>16</sup>

The principal source for this classical history was in fact Plutarch. Jean Cocteau makes the point that the Revolutionaries were led astray by the examples held out by this one author: “The great men of the Revolution were Plutarch’s victims. Art always imitates art, politics always imitates politics”.<sup>17</sup> He cites in particular the example of Charlotte Corday, Marat’s fanatical and sincere assassin: “Even Charlotte Corday arrives from Caen carrying her Plutarch in her pocket”;<sup>18</sup> Corday had indeed spent the day before the assassination reading her copy of Plutarch. Another prominent Girondin heroine, Mme Roland, was similarly attached to Plutarch’s example and, because we know a lot more about her from her public career, letters, and prison memoirs than we do about Corday, she serves as a fascinating case study of Plutarch’s reception by the generation that carried out the French Revolution.

In her *Mémoires*, Mme Roland attributes her childhood republicanism to the influence of Plutarch, claiming that, just like Rousseau, she first began reading his works at the age of nine:

I took delight in this last work [Dacier’s Plutarch] more than in any other thing I had as yet read, even the love stories that had nevertheless touched me greatly, like that of the unhappy Labédoyère couple which I still recall even though I have not reread it since my childhood. But Plutarch seemed to be my true pasture: I’ll never forget the Lent of 1763 (I was nine at the time), when I brought it with me to church pretending it was my missal. The ideas and impressions that made me a republican without my having thought of becoming one date from this time.<sup>19</sup>

Certainly, Mme Roland is well aware of Rousseau’s own obsession with Plutarch, as demonstrated by the following passage from her *Réflexions sur Plutarque* (1787), an unpublished text cited by Gita May:

In his youth, Rousseau had read Plutarch; he had meditated on him as an adult: he drew from the works of this great man the profound senses of justice and humanity that permeate all his writing. The great elevation of

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<sup>16</sup> See Hunt (1984: 28). Similar points are made in Talbot Parker (1937) and Blanchard (1980).

<sup>17</sup> See Cocteau (1957: 1, 50).

<sup>18</sup> See Cocteau (1957: 1, 50).

<sup>19</sup> See Roland, ed. de Roux (1986: 212–213).

his views combines with his strength of character must have made him very vehement in his expression: for the elevation of thought contributes to the art of expressing it, and energy of feeling is the soul of language. For this reason, Rousseau is the most eloquent of authors: a distinction and a glory that ought again to be attributed, at least in part, to Plutarch.<sup>20</sup>

Rousseau was still reading Plutarch at the end of his life. In the “Quatrième promenade” of *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (published posthumously in 1782), he remarks:

Among the small number of books that I still read from time to time, I am most attached to, and derive the greatest benefit from my copy of Plutarch. It was the first thing I read as a child, it will be the last thing I read as an old man: he is more or less the only author that I have never read without some profit.<sup>21</sup>

Mme Roland similarly chose to reread Plutarch at the very end of her life, again seemingly in self-conscious imitation of her literary hero. As she waited to be executed, she asked to be supplied with her favourite books: “First and foremost, Plutarch’s *Parallel lives*.<sup>22</sup> Her most recent biographer, Siân Reynolds, observes that “Mme Roland is famous for her love of Plutarch.... Certainly Plutarch touched a nerve more than anything else she had ever read”.<sup>23</sup> Reynolds goes on to observe that “We don’t know the real age at which she read some of these books, but decoding the prison memoirs means looking through the prism of her models, Plutarch and Jean-Jacques Rousseau – heroism and sensibility – who would supersede Voltaire in her mind after the age of twenty”.<sup>24</sup>

This transition, from the sway of Voltaire to that of Rousseau and Plutarch, was common amongst the Revolutionaries: not just amongst Girondins such as Charlotte Corday and Mme Roland, but also amongst their Jacobin adversaries. Mme Roland herself associated Plutarch with Rousseau in her mind, insisting that her character had been moulded by the successive examples provided by these two authors:

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<sup>20</sup> See May (1974: 37).

<sup>21</sup> See Rousseau, ed. Gagnebin (1983: 58).

<sup>22</sup> See May (1974: 36).

<sup>23</sup> See Reynolds (2012: 25).

<sup>24</sup> See Reynolds (2012: 25).

Rousseau made ... an impression on me comparable to that of Plutarch when I was eight: it seemed to be the nourishment I required and interpreted feelings I'd had before reading him, but which he alone could explain to me.

Plutarch had disposed me to become a republican: he had awoken the resolve and pride that make for its character; he had inspired in me a true enthusiasm for public virtue and liberty. Rousseau showed me the domestic bliss which I could expect and the ineffable joy that I was capable of experiencing.<sup>25</sup>

To these two models, she finally added Montaigne, writing on 23 January 1778 that "I have my breviary, the excellent Jean-Jacques; when I'll manage to add Plutarch and Montaigne for ever more, these three wise guides will make up my daily society".<sup>26</sup> She is of broadly the same opinion on the eve of the Revolution, writing on 13 January 1787 that "Each year, we'll reread Plutarch, and part of good Jean-Jacques; we'll leaf through the pages of Montaigne" ("nous relirons Plutarque et une partie du bon Jean-Jacques; nous feuilleterons Montaigne").<sup>27</sup>

Mme Roland is broadly representative of her generation. For example, another prominent Revolutionary, the painter and Jacobin activist Jean-Louis David, still viewed Plutarch as central to his own artistic (and political) processes long after the collapse not just of the Republic but even of the Napoleonic Empire: in a letter to Antoine-Jean Gros, a former pupil and prominent artist of the Napoleonic period, he exclaims: "Quick, quick, my friend, leaf through the pages of your Plutarch".<sup>28</sup>

Mme Roland's movement from Voltaire to Plutarch and to Rousseau, as identified by Reynolds, was far from unique. It was of course possible, however, for the influence of Voltaire and Rousseau to co-exist. The Revolution spent a great deal of time thinking about how best to educate its future citizens (and how best to account for history). Condorcet's *Rapport et projet de décret sur l'organisation générale de l'instruction publique* of April 1792 – written just as France was about to become a republic and start history anew by inaugurating its own Year 1 – appears to endorse and restate Voltaire's views on the primacy

<sup>25</sup> See Roland, ed. de Roux (1986: 302). Mme Roland could of course also have found an account of "domestic bliss" in Plutarch's *Consolation to my wife*.

<sup>26</sup> See Roland, ed. Dauban (1867: II, 237). May cites a similar sentiment: "I was saying only yesterday, to a most amiable man ... who caught me reading *Émile*, that I had chosen Rousseau as my breviary, Plutarch as my teacher, and Montaigne as my friend" (1974: 91).

<sup>27</sup> See Roland, ed. Perroud (1900–1902: I, 662).

<sup>28</sup> Letter of April 1821, cited in David (1880: 572).

of history over biography, and on the paramount importance of establishing historical truths:

Finally, given that we must say everything, that all our prejudices must now be cast aside, the long, detailed study of the languages of the ancients – a study which would require us to read the books they left behind for us – would be more harmful than useful.

We are trying to make truths more widely known through education, and these books are full of falsehoods. We are trying to train the use of reason, and these books are liable to lead our reason astray. We are at such a great distance from the ancients, we have travelled so much further down the path that leads to truth, that our reason must already be fully developed if these precious relics from the past are to benefit it without corrupting it.<sup>29</sup>

However, Condorcet was the child not just of Voltaire, but also of Rousseau. In his earlier *Cinq mémoires sur l'instruction publique* (1791), Condorcet had already made the case for the continuing usefulness not only of Plutarch but even of Amyot. He suggested that education is in fact not just a matter of establishing historical truths; it needs necessarily also to provide useful moral examples in the ways dismissed by Voltaire in *Le Siècle de Louis XIV*:

We can find a model for this genre in Plutarch's lives of generals and statesmen: those he left us combine a precious stock of actions ideally suited to characterising men and portraying their morals with an equally happy choice of phrases, whether brilliant, or sublime, or affecting.... The evolution of our opinions and mores has not managed to destroy their charm.

One could use parts of the *Parallel lives* in Amyot's translation, which it would be easy to modernise for its use of language without in any way detracting from its freshness, which makes it preferable to more accurate translations that are nevertheless more awkward and lifeless.<sup>30</sup>

Condorcet suggests not only that his contemporaries continue to read Plutarch, but that they follow his example and produce new Lives:

<sup>29</sup> See Baczkó (2000: 193). See also Hunt (1984: 29–31).

<sup>30</sup> See Condorcet, eds Coutel and Kintzler (1994: 201).

One could, by imitating Plutarch, also give the lives of modern great men, and preference ought to be given to our fellow Frenchmen. It would not be difficult to produce philosophical accounts of the gallant lives of Bayard or Du Guesclin. Men, having become equal under the sway of reason, may derive both pleasure and utility from contemplating, amidst base humanity, those truly noble souls that the prejudices under which they labored did not manage to corrupt, and that a false superiority had not managed to bring down. They will observe with interest the efforts made by courage on behalf of liberty rendered useless by ignorance, and inequality everywhere leading to tyranny. They will admire those few, rare men who raise themselves above their century, taking from its errors only enough to make it still plausible that they should have belonged to it.<sup>31</sup>

Condorcet's own imitation of Plutarch had already taken the form of a *Vie de Turgot* (1786) and, ironically, a *Vie de Voltaire* (1787).

The educational system produced by Condorcet and his contemporaries ought to have produced a generation of young Republicans, enthused by Plutarch's accounts of Timoleon and Dion and Marcus Brutus, as well as by Rousseau's account of his own response to these exemplars. Instead, Napoleon's coup of 1799, leading eventually to the creation of his Empire in 1804, saw a predictable shift in emphasis away from Plutarch's Republican heroes. Instead, Imperial propaganda turned its focus towards Alexander and Caesar, to whom Napoleon was frequently compared both during his reign and afterwards. Napoleon himself was known to be an admirer of Plutarch, and understood the value of being seen to emulate Plutarch's heroes. Thus he ostentatiously stationed a guard in front of Haydn's house during the occupation of Vienna in imitation of the protection extended by Alexander to Pindar's house during the occupation of Thebes.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, as Stendhal notes in *La Chartreuse de Parme*, Napoleon alluded to Themistocles in his letter to the British Prince Regent of 14 July 1815, written after his defeat at Waterloo.<sup>33</sup> Subsequently, Plutarch continued to appear as a frequent point of reference in key works of the Napoleonic corpus of the 1820s and 1830s, most notably Marin de Las Cases' *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène* (1823), Henri Jomini's *Vie politique et militaire de Napoléon racontée par lui-même au tribunal de César, d'Alexandre et de Frédéric* (1827), and Louis Marchand's *Précis des guerres de César par Napoléon, écrit par M. Marchand à l'île de Sainte-Hélène sous la dictée de l'Empereur* (1836).

<sup>31</sup> See Condorcet, eds Coutel and Kintzler (1994: 202–203).

<sup>32</sup> See Hirzel (1912: 165).

<sup>33</sup> See Stendhal, ed. Ansel *et al.* (2005–2014: III, 299).

Perhaps as a result of this, Plutarch was coming rapidly to be associated with a bygone age: the terrible and glorious, but decidedly finished eras of Revolution and Empire, now tentatively replaced not so much by the ostensible aristocratic values of the Restoration as by the liberal capitalism that came eventually openly to dominate the post-1830 Bourgeois monarchy of Louis-Philippe.

Indeed, the Restoration marks the beginning of Roger Magraw's Bourgeois century for good reason: "la Charte" granted by Louis XVIII – and that Charles X tried to suspend, thereby precipitating the July Revolution of 1830 – marked a definitive turn towards the English (constitutional) model first touted by Voltaire in the *Lettres philosophiques* and, as a result, a turn away from the Classical models provided by Plutarch and championed by Rousseau. It is just as Plutarch appeared for the first time in centuries no longer to possess any real relevance that Stendhal produced a series of singular novels in constant dialogue, in my account of them at least, with the *Parallel lives* and the history of their reception during the Enlightenment, the Revolution, and the Empire. This chapter will end by briefly looking at this peculiar late flowering of interest in Plutarch and what it tells us about his afterlife in the French eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Stendhal is a very peculiar nineteenth-century Realist because, in many ways, he was in fact a man of the eighteenth century. Born in 1783, he spent a large part of his childhood identifying passionately with the hero(in)es of the Enlightenment and the French Republic, and in particular with Mme Roland, consistently listed as his ideal reader.<sup>34</sup> On the face of it, Stendhal's novels belong emphatically to the new era: his hero(in)es, with whom we as readers are encouraged to identify, find themselves mired in the squalid realities of the Restoration and the Orleanist Bourgeois monarchy to which the heroic age of Revolution and Empire gave way. His hero(in)es are, however, also anachronistic: they look to Napoleon and Mme Roland and Danton and Rousseau, but also to exemplars from the sixteenth century, another of Stendhal's favourite periods of history, for quixotic models of inappropriate and even ridiculous behaviour. In the process, they prefer to live their own lives in their idealistic imaginations as opposed to in their contemporary reality, just as Rousseau and Mme Roland had before them. May's account of the impact of Rousseau on Mme Roland serves just as effectively as an account of the impact of Rousseau and Mme Roland on Julien Sorel and Mathilde de La Mole respectively in *Le Rouge et le Noir*:

<sup>34</sup> See Stendhal, ed. Del Litto (1973: 880, 1053 [*Promenades dans Rome*]), Stendhal, ed. Del Litto (1980: 36), and Stendhal, ed. Del Litto (1981–1982: II, 429 [*Souvenirs d'égotisme*]; II, 536 [*Vie de Henry Brulard*]).

It is thanks to Rousseau that Mme Roland lost contact with reality and found refuge in the delights of an imaginary world. He it was who encouraged her to shape herself according to a personal ideal that she had derived from her reading and who encouraged her to cultivate her sense of self, that euphoric and egotistical sense of her own existence, and to revel in the roles of the heroes and heroines from Plutarch.<sup>35</sup>

Stendhal's heroes and heroines make almost no mention of Plutarch or his *Lives*, even though Plutarch himself was a frequent reference in Stendhal's private papers and in his non-fictional writings;<sup>36</sup> they are nevertheless Plutarch's delusional victims, to borrow from Cocteau, for they cultivate their anachronistic love of liberty and egotistical senses of self by seeking to emulate their own exemplars in exactly the same way that Rousseau and Mme Roland had sought to emulate Plutarch's Greek and Roman hero(in)es. Whereas French literature of the nineteenth century, most notably in the work of Flaubert, would go on to ironise and even mock such Romantic, quixotic delusions of the imagination, Stendhal uses his novels everywhere to tread a fine line between irony and idealism. His novels give us the Lives of young men and young women who would have wanted to live out the destinies of a Mme Roland or a Napoleon but who instead find themselves stuck in a profoundly post-heroic age: the post-Plutarchan age that in France began in 1815.

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35 See May (1974: 240).

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# Plutarch and Goethe

*Paul Bishop*

In some respects it should come as no surprise that there was a lifelong engagement with the writings of Plutarch on the part of the German poet, novelist, playwright, and scientist Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832). After all, he maintained a wide range of interests across all kinds of ancient and contemporary literature(s), aside from making interventions in the fields of philosophy and science. Nor is it unusual, given the significant reception of Plutarch by German (and, indeed, European) intellectuals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> Yet there are some specific contours to Goethe's reading of this ancient Greek biographer, and one could even argue that there is a discernible Plutarchan influence on Goethe's intellectual and creative development. Our discussion here is focused on three aspects of Goethe's Plutarch-reception: Plutarch as an intellectual source for Goethe (and, in particular, Goethe's view of history); Plutarch's figures of the Mothers as a specific source for the Mothers Scene of *Faust*, Part 2; and Plutarch as a model of (auto)biography.

## 1 Plutarch as an Intellectual and Historical Source

From his diaries, correspondence, and records of his conversations we know that Plutarch was an author Goethe read at various times in his life, particularly in the periods January 1787, August 1798, 1811, November 1820, October 1821, 1826, September to November 1831 and January to February 1832; the final mention made of Plutarch in Goethe's daily journal is for 14 March 1832.<sup>2</sup> In these, the last few months of his life, Goethe had asked his daughter-in-law, Ottilie, to read him extracts from Plutarch's *Parallel lives* and *Moralia*. This longstanding appreciation of Plutarch is attested to by remarks made in a letter of 28 September 1811 to Goethe's friend, the philologist and critic Friedrich August Wolf (1759–1824), whose editions of Plutarch he had borrowed to take with him to the spa in Karlsbad: "The shorter writings of Plutarch were just right

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<sup>1</sup> Howard (1970).

<sup>2</sup> Wilpert (1998: 830); Grumach (1949: 848–861).

for here: they kept us entertained for several weeks almost on their own, and I have fallen in love with them so much that you will only see this translation again with difficulty".<sup>3</sup>

The translation in question in here was the one by Johann Friedrich Salomon Kaltwasser (1752–1813), whose version of the *Moralia* appeared in 9 volumes in Frankfurt from 1783 to 1800, and whose rendering of the *Parallel lives* appeared in 10 volumes in Magdeburg from 1799 to 1806. Indeed, so impressed was Goethe with Kaltwasser's translation of Plutarch, that he took over some of Plutarch's formulations in this translation directly into his own *Maxims and Reflections*. For instance "Position the stone in relation to the plumb-line, not the plumb-line in relation to the stone"<sup>4</sup> is taken from Plutarch's *On progress in virtue* 75F;<sup>5</sup> while the maxim "The greatest happiness for someone who thinks is to have fathomed the fathomable, and quietly revere the unfathomable" (ed. Hecker, §1207)<sup>6</sup> draws on Plutarch's allusion in *On fortune* (98A) to a fragment (759 Nauck) from an unknown play by Sophocles.<sup>7</sup> The substance of another maxim (ed. Hecker, §1191) "Anaxagoras teaches that all animals have active reason, but not passive reason, which is so to speak the interpreter of the understanding"<sup>8</sup> draws on the pseudoeigraphical work attributed to Plutarch *Doctrines of the philosophers* (5.20, 908F–909B).

There are other examples of Goethe using Plutarch as an intellectual source for his own purposes and projects. In an early satirical play from 1773 entitled *Gods, Heroes and Wieland*, Euripides says to Wieland, "If your plays have saved as many people's lives as mine have, then you should speak",<sup>9</sup> building on an allusion to Plutarch's *Life of Nicias*. There (29) Plutarch relates how, during the Peloponnesian War, some of the Athenians had been "for the sake of Euripides", for "the Sicilians, it would seem, more than any of the Hellenes outside the homeland, had a yearning fondness for his poetry", and consequently "many Athenians who reached home in safety greeted Euripides with affectionate hearts, and recounted to him, some that they had been set free from slavery for rehearsing what they remembered of his works; and some that when they

<sup>3</sup> Goethe, ed. Morawe (1965: 165).

<sup>4</sup> Goethe, ed. Trunz (1960a: 398).

<sup>5</sup> There, Plutarch cites the proverb "Adjust the stone to fit / The line, and not the line to fit the stone".

<sup>6</sup> Goethe, ed. Trunz (1960a: 467).

<sup>7</sup> "What can be taught I learn; what can be found I seek; but God I ask to answer prayer". All translations from Plutarch's *Lives* and *Moralia* in the remainder of this paper are taken from the Loeb Classical Library.

<sup>8</sup> Goethe, ed. Trunz (1960a: 443). For the reference to Anaxagoras, see Diels-Kranz A 101.

<sup>9</sup> Goethe, ed. Trunz (1960c: 207).

were roaming about after the final battle they had received food and drink for singing some of his choral hymns".

Much later in his life, in connection with his research for an article published in *Kunst und Altertum* (vol. 4, nos. 1 and 2, 1823),<sup>10</sup> Goethe studied Plutarch's account in his *Life of Aemilius Paulus* of Aemilius Paulus' triumph over Perseus in the Third Macedonian War at the battle of Pydna. For Goethe there was an important parallel between the depiction of the triumphs of Caesar by the Italian Renaissance artist Andrea Mantegna and the classical accounts of military victories found in Plutarch (and, for that matter, in *The civil wars* by the Roman historian of Greek origin, Appian of Alexandria).<sup>11</sup>

In his section on the Pythagoreans in the first part, devoted to the Greeks, of his *History of the Doctrine of Colours*, Goethe draws again on the pseudographical *Doctrines of the philosophers* included in Plutarch's *Moralia*. In this section of his historical survey of colour theory, Goethe discusses the ancient Greeks' view of catoptrics, the study of phenomena arising from reflected light and the use of mirrors.<sup>12</sup> In his treatise pseudo-Plutarch tells us in 4.14 (901C-D), "Of those images which are presented to our eyes in mirrors":

Empedocles says that these images are caused by certain effluxes which, meeting together and insisting upon the superficies of the mirror, are perfected by that fiery quality emitted by the said mirror, which transmutes withal the air that surrounds it. Democritus and Epicurus, that the specular appearances are formed by the subsistence of images which flow from our eyes; these fall upon the mirror and remain, while the light rebounds to the eye. The followers of Pythagoras explain it by the reflection of the sight; for our sight being extended (as it were) to the brass, and meeting with the smooth dense surface thereof it is struck back, and caused to return upon itself; the same appears in the hand, when it is stretched out and then brought back again to the shoulder. Any one may apply these instances to explain the manner of seeing.

In his *History*, Goethe adapts this information as follows:

The Pythagoreans have catoptrical phenomena arise through a reflection of the vision. The vision is said to extend to the mirror and, encountering

<sup>10</sup> Goethe, ed. and trans. Gage (1980: 150–165).

<sup>11</sup> Grumach (1949: 861).

<sup>12</sup> For Goethe's discussion of the colours associated with catoptrical phenomena, see his *Doctrine of Colour*, chapter 31, "Catoptrical Colours", §366–388, esp. §366.

its density and smoothness, turns back on itself, while something it experiences something similar with the hand when it is stretched out and brought back to the shoulder.<sup>13</sup>

Further on, Goethe returns to and adapts Plutarch's account of how Empedocles explained reflection:

According to Empedocles what one sees in a mirror takes place as a result of outflows streaming from objects, which collect together on the surface of the mirror and are completed by something fiery that comes forth from the eye, which the surrounding air into which these outflows are driven sets into motion.<sup>14</sup>

Plutarch thus serves Goethe as an important intellectual source – one among, to be sure, many others – but what was, apart from the intrinsic fascination of Plutarch's writing, that brought Goethe back to the Greek historian and essayist time and again? The answer – or at least part of it – surely lies in Plutarch's temperament, reflected in his view of history.

For the question or problem of historicity was one that greatly came to pre-occupy Goethe in his old age. This preoccupation is reflected in an admission made in a letter to Wilhelm von Humboldt of 1 December 1831: "I gladly admit that, at my advanced age, everything appears increasingly historical to me: whether something took place in the distant past, in kingdoms far away, or just happened to me close by in an instant, is one and the same"; and he related this feeling both to his own sense of identity in time, and to Ottilie Goethe's reading of extracts from Plutarch to him: "Indeed, I am becoming ever more historical to myself; and because my good daughter Ottilie reads out Plutarch to me in the evenings, it sometimes seems to me that it is ridiculous if I were to relate the story of my life in this kind of way".<sup>15</sup>

While clearly relating his preoccupation to his own experience of time passing and old age, Goethe had long pondered the existential significance of historical enquiry. On 24 November 1824, Goethe's amanuensis, Johann Peter Eckermann (1792–1854), engaged in a conversation with Goethe – sparked by Eckermann's suggestion to an English visitor in Weimar that he read a German translation of Plutarch – about Roman and Greek history. According

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<sup>13</sup> Goethe, ed. Trunz (1960b: 14).

<sup>14</sup> Goethe, ed. Trunz (1960b: 16).

<sup>15</sup> Goethe, ed. Mandelkow (1967: 463).

to Eckermann, Goethe responded to this suggestion with the following reflection on Greek and Roman history:

Roman history is no longer suited to us. We have become too humane for the triumphs of Caesar not to offend our feelings. Neither are we much charmed by the history of Greece. When this people turns against a foreign foe, it is indeed great and glorious; but the division of the states, and their eternal wars with one another, where Greek fights against Greek, are insufferable. Besides, the history of our own time is thoroughly great and important; the battles of Leipzig and Waterloo stand out with such prominence, that of Marathon and other like it are gradually eclipsed. Neither are our individual heroes inferior to theirs; the French Marshals, Blücher, and Wellington, vie with any of the heroes of antiquity.<sup>16</sup>

Here we find a tone that is not usually associated with Goethe: an emphasis on the contemporary and the modern, and an awareness that the modern world has as much to offer as the ancient. How does this aspect of Goethe fit with a devotion to Plutarch, whose *Parallel lives* sought to examine a series of biographies of Greeks and Romans alike, presenting them in pairs in order to explore their vices and virtues? The answer may be found in another conversation with Eckermann, this time on 1 April 1827, where we find a counter-balancing emphasis on the importance of an awareness of tradition for the development of the individual. “Study Molière, study Shakespeare; but, above all things, the old Greeks, and always the Greeks”, he now urged.<sup>17</sup>

By way of reply to Eckermann’s observation that for “highly-endowed natures the study of the authors of antiquity may be invaluable; but in general it appears to have little influence upon personal character”, Goethe responded that “a worthless man will always remain worthless; and a little mind will not, by daily intercourse with the great mind of antiquity, become one inch greater”, but “a noble man, in whose soul God has placed the capability for future greatness of character and elevation of mind, will, through acknowledgement of and familiar intercourse with the elevated natures of ancient Greeks and Romans, develop to the utmost, and every day make a visible approach to similar greatness”.<sup>18</sup> Of course, in 1827 Goethe was talking about the art of antiquity, which still had a potency in the present, while in 1824 he had been discussing its history, the actuality of a way of life that was long since gone.

<sup>16</sup> Eckermann, trans. Oxenford, ed. Moorhead (1998: 72).

<sup>17</sup> Eckermann, trans. Oxenford, ed. Moorhead (1998: 185).

<sup>18</sup> Eckermann, trans. Oxenford, ed. Moorhead (1998: 185–186).

Writing to his friend, the composer Carl Friedrich Zelter (1758–1832), on 17 September 1831, Goethe commented on Plutarch in relation to his own autobiographical work, suggestively entitled *Poetry and Truth* (*Dichtung und Wahrheit*), and linked it to a truth he discerned in Plutarch's *Life of Solon*, 2 (cf. *ibid.* 31): "In this respect I find confirmation in the saying that is constantly renewed for me by the ancient writer [i.e., Plutarch], 'I go on learning, and only from this do I notice that I am growing old'".<sup>19</sup> What Goethe takes here to be a lesson from Plutarch is a truth about the universality of historical insight, something that Goethe had already expressed in his *Tame Xenions*, a collection of satirical epigrams he had co-authored with Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805). In the fourth section we find the following quatrain:

"What was it that kept you from us so apart?"  
 I always read Plutarch again and again.  
 "And what was the lesson he did impart?"  
 They were all human beings – so much is plain.<sup>20</sup>

[ "Was hat dich nur von uns entfernt?"  
*Hab' immer den Plutarch gelesen.*  
 "Was hast du denn dabei gelernt?"  
*Sind eben alle Menschen gewesen.* ]

The perennial value of the insight Goethe found in Plutarch was later to inspire the famous art historian, Ernst Gombrich (1909–2001), to quote these very lines at the opening of an address given in 1985 on the topic of cultural relativism in the Humanities. In contrast to this Plutarchan-Goethean approach, Gombrich cited the lectures on history in which Hegel formulates an opposing view, which Gombrich characterises as "cultural relativism". Gombrich makes it clear which side *he* is on, following up the quatrain by Goethe with the "semi-humorous verse" that comes after it, a sly attack on the Roman historian and statesman Cato the Elder (234–149 BC), known (thanks in part to Plutarch's *Life of Cato the Elder* 21) for his conservative stance on preserving ancestral custom (*mos maiorum*):

To censure others Cato was prone  
 Himself he preferred not to sleep alone.

<sup>19</sup> Goethe, ed. Mandelkow (1967: 449).

<sup>20</sup> Gombrich (1987: 686); cf. Goethe, ed. Nicolai (1995: 1040).

[*Cato wollte wohl andre strafen;  
Selbander mocht' er gerne schlafen.*]<sup>21</sup>

As Gombrich remarks, Goethe “thought he understood Cato only too well, for after all, he had learned from Plutarch that they were all human beings, men and women of flesh and bones like any of us”.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, Goethe was aware that this lesson of history – what it teaches us about what the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) called the “human, all-too-human” – risks drifting away from existential significance into the merely trivial. As Goethe had once observed in a conversation of early June 1811 with the scholar and literary historian Friedrich Wilhelm Riemer (1774–1845), “the greatest part of history is no more than gossip”, citing in support of this view Plutarch’s *On the malice of Herodotus*; and commenting further that “history is a fairytale beginning to be told, a fact floats on it like water, until the water itself disappears”.<sup>23</sup>

## 2       Plutarch and *Faust*

Arguably the most significant influence of Plutarch on Goethe is as a source for one of the most striking scenes in *Faust*, Part 2, the so-called “Mothers Scene”. At the command of the emperor, Faust must conjure up the images of Paris and Helen (i.e., the most beautiful man and the most beautiful woman of the ancient world), and so he turns to Mephistopheles for advice. Mephisto (to give him an abbreviated name) explains that Faust must descend to the realm of the Mothers, mysterious female figures inhabiting a realm beyond time and space: “Enthroned in solitude are goddesses – / No place, so space around them, time still less, I mention them with some uneasiness, / They are *the Mothers!*”.<sup>24</sup> Faust’s response is a mixture of thrill and terror: “The Mothers! But how strange ‘the Mothers’ / sounds!”. As Faust goes on to learn, the Mothers sit around a tripod, which Faust must touch with a key with which Mephisto provides him. The meaning and significance of this scene – Faust’s actual descent to the Mothers is not, and perhaps could not be, depicted – has long puzzled critics and interpreters of the work.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Goethe, ed. Nicolai (1995: 1040).

<sup>22</sup> Gombrich (1987: 688).

<sup>23</sup> Biedermann (1909: 130).

<sup>24</sup> Goethe, trans. Luke (1994: 51).

<sup>25</sup> Williams (2001: 122–143).

On 10 January 1830 Goethe read this scene to Eckermann, apparently in a manner that struck Eckermann “so forcibly” that he felt compelled to ask Goethe to explain this remarkably enigmatic scene. “But he, as usual, wrapped himself up in mystery, as he looked on me with wide-open eyes and repeated the words: *Die Mütter! Mütter!* ‘s klingt so wunderlich! ‘The Mothers! Mothers! nay, it sounds so strange’”.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, Goethe did make one concession to Eckermann’s curiosity about the meaning and function of the Mothers: “I can reveal to you no more”, he said, “except that I found in Plutarch that in ancient Greece mention was made of the Mothers as divinities. This is all that I owe to others, the rest is my own invention”. Leaving aside other likely allusions in and influences on this episode – such as Goethe’s experience in Naples of using tripods as a means of heating rooms (see his entry in his *Italian journey* for 26 February 1787) or his visit in the company of Tischbein to the archaeological remains of Herculaneum, reached after descending a long flight of steps (see his entry for 18 March 1787) –,<sup>27</sup> how, if at all, does this reference to Plutarch help us to understand this scene?

First of all, to what part of Plutarch might Goethe be referring in his remark to Eckermann? In his *Life of Marcellus*, Plutarch notes that “there is a city of Sicily called Engyium, not large, but very ancient, and famous for the appearance there of goddesses, who are called Mothers”.<sup>28</sup> So here we find the idea of matriarchal deities explicitly stated. At the same time, in the dialogue *The obsolescence of oracles*, Cleombrotus attributes to Plato the teaching that the world is structured around the shape of the triangle:

... the worlds are not infinite in number, nor one, nor five, but one hundred and eighty-three, arranged in the form of a triangle, each side of the triangle having sixty worlds; of the three left over each is placed at an angle, and those that are next to one another are in contact and revolve gently as in a dance. The inner area of the triangle is the common hearth of all, and is called the Plain of Truth, in which the accounts, the forms, and the patterns of all things that have come to pass and of all that shall come to pass rest undisturbed; and round about them lies Eternity, whence Time, like an ever-flowing stream, is conveyed to the worlds.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Eckermann, trans. Oxenford, ed. Moorhead (1998: 342).

<sup>27</sup> Buccianeri (2008: 521–522).

<sup>28</sup> Plu. *Marc.* 20.

<sup>29</sup> Plu. *De def. or.* 422B–C.

So it would seem that some of this Platonic cosmology just as much informs the imagery of Mephisto's description of the realm of the Mothers as well as any specific reference to actual female goddess figures.

Yet in the *Life of Marcellus* there is a subsequent reference to the Mothers that might explain its appeal to Goethe. When, in the wars between Carthage and Rome, the Sicilian city of Engium decided to embrace the Carthaginian cause, one of its leading citizens, Nicias, tried to persuade them to change their mind and support the Romans. His fellow townsmen wanted to arrest him and hand him over to the Carthaginians, but Nicias devised a cunning plan to escape their clutch:

Nicias ... gave utterance in public to unbecoming speeches about the Mothers, and did much to show that he rejected and despised the prevalent brief in their manifestations.... [J]ust as [his enemies] were ready to arrest him, an assembly of the citizens was held, and here Nicias, right in the midst of some advice that he was giving the people, suddenly threw himself upon the ground, and after a little while, amid the silence and consternation which naturally prevailed, lifted his head, turned it about, and spoke in a low and trembling voice, little by little raising and sharpening its tone. And when he saw the whole audience struck dumb with horror, he tore off his mantle, rent his tunic, and leaping up half naked, ran towards the exit from the theatre, crying out that he was pursued by the Mothers. No man venturing to lay hands upon him or even to come his way, out of superstitious fear, but all avoiding him, he ran out to the gate of the city, freely using all the cries and gestures that would become a man possessed and crazed.<sup>30</sup>

Could this part of Plutarch's account have caught Goethe's imagination, too? It has been argued that it did. For instance, in his lecture on Goethe's "revelation" and the "riddle" of *Faust* given in Berlin on 12 March 1909, Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) picked up on this episode – and interpreted it in his own idiosyncratic way. For Steiner, the cry "The Mothers, the Mothers press hard on me!" was "a cry which in old times one heard only from a man who was in a condition of clairvoyance and withdrawn from the physical world", so that Nicias "could be regarded either as a fool, as one possessed, or as a clairvoyant", so which is he? According to Steiner, Nicias' cry reveals that "he is not possessed, but inspired; that he can say something which can be learnt in the spiritual world – and so he remains unmolested". "On reading this scene", Steiner concluded, "there

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<sup>30</sup> Plu. *Marc.* 20.

is released something in Goethe's soul which had been sown as the kernel of initiation already during his Frankfurt period" and "he knew what it meant to penetrate into the spiritual world", hence "when Mephistopheles speaks of the 'Mothers', Faust shudders".<sup>31</sup> For Steiner, the Plutarchan reference opens the way to a "spiritual", even mystical interpretation of Goethe's text – as esoteric or anthroposophical readings tend to do.

But one could also argue that identifying the Plutarchan source from the *Life of Marcellus* reveals exactly the opposite: it highlights the parodic, even comic, aspect of the Mothers scene and of Faust's subsequent invocation of the Mothers in his conjuration of Paris and Helen before the emperor and the court. Similarly, its use suggests a playful obfuscation in Goethe's refusal to explain the Mothers to Eckermann, his gaze with "wide-opened eyes", and his deliberately mystificatory recitation of the line, "The Mothers! Mothers! nay, it sounds so strange". So read in a rhetorical way, the Plutarchan source helps us interpret the complex use of play and irony in Goethe's little understood (and much misunderstood) masterpiece.

### 3 Plutarch as a Model of (Auto)biography

What significance can be seen in the fact that Plutarch was, on the evidence of his journals or diaries (the *Tages- und Jahreshefte*) for 1811, one of the authors whom Goethe was reading when he was writing his autobiographical work, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*?

On one hand, it bears out the level of reflection Goethe gave to the problem of writing autobiography. For on 18 May 1810 Goethe had recorded in his journal a series of thoughts about the problems of autobiography. A programmatic entry in his journal for this date sets out the morphological concept underlying the project of his own autobiography – metamorphosis.<sup>32</sup> Here Goethe contrasts the "ironic view of life (in a higher sense)", which lifts biography above life, and the "superstitious view", in which it returns to life again; whereas the former view "flatters understanding and reason", the latter appeals to "sensuousness and imagination"; if correctly combined, "a satisfying totality emerges". From the standpoint of the principle of metamorphosis, "the basis of everything is physiological"; that is to say, "there is something physiological-pathological, for instance, in all transitions of organic nature, as it moves from one stage of metamorphosis into another", and these transitions are, as such, different

<sup>31</sup> Steiner (1984: 341–342).

<sup>32</sup> Goethe (1891: 120).

from any “morbid condition”.<sup>33</sup> (So what distinguishes something pathological in the physiological sense from morbidity is that, in the former, a development is taking place; “each of these metamorphoses”, as the French scholar Joseph-François Angelloz [1893–1978] once glossed this passage, “means suffering, is ‘physiological-pathological’, is a trial undertaken with a happy result in view”).<sup>34</sup>

For Goethe, moreover, the process of metamorphosis is not simply internal to each individual, but also results from its interaction with the world, which can lead to both positive and negative consequences. “The action of what is external produces hindrances [*Retardationen*], which are often pathological in the first sense”, Goethe writes, “but they can also produce a morbid condition and, through a reverse series of metamorphoses, destroy the being”.<sup>35</sup> As Angelloz remarks, the morbid “bears the danger of retarding or clogging the development of the human personality; it springs from the outside world, and this is where the ‘hazards’ of life come into play”.<sup>36</sup>

In a conversation with Eckermann of 30 March 1831, where they discussed the third volume of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Goethe observed that the work contained “merely the results” of his own life, “and the particular facts related serve only to confirm a general reflection – a higher truth”.<sup>37</sup> He added that he had deliberately chosen the ambiguous title *Dichtung und Wahrheit* because “it raises itself by higher tendencies from the region of a lower reality”.<sup>38</sup> As Angelloz has noted, “Goethe succeeded in creating a new kind of autobiography”, namely, one in which there is “personal confession, which must be truth, the lyrical novel, which may be poetry, and the history of a period, which is reality”.<sup>39</sup> And to Eckermann, Goethe himself claimed that “a fact of our lives is valuable, not insofar as it is true, but insofar as it is significant”,<sup>40</sup> in other words, the notion of “truth” in a biography rises above the concern with factual accuracy.

By contrast, Plutarch’s approach to biography was a more rigorously pedagogic and conceptually schematic one; indeed, it was a project with explicitly moral intentions, designed to provide a series of ethical guides for the reader – and for Plutarch himself. In the introductory paragraph in his *Life of Aemilius*

<sup>33</sup> Goethe (1891: 120).

<sup>34</sup> Angelloz (1958: 235).

<sup>35</sup> Goethe (1891: 120).

<sup>36</sup> Angelloz (1958: 236).

<sup>37</sup> Eckermann, trans. Oxenford, ed. Moorhead (1998: 406).

<sup>38</sup> Eckermann, trans. Oxenford, ed. Moorhead (1998: 406).

<sup>39</sup> Angelloz (1958: 237).

<sup>40</sup> Eckermann, trans. Oxenford, ed. Moorhead (1998: 406).

*Paulus*, for instance, Plutarch notes that he had begun writing his *Lives* for the sake of others, but added: “I find that I am continuing the work and delighting in it now for my own sake also, using history as a mirror and endeavouring in a manner to fashion and adorn my life in conformity with the virtues therein depicted”.<sup>41</sup> In other words, for Plutarch biography is primarily *ethical*.<sup>42</sup> To this extent, Plutarch’s biographical studies – such as his *Life of Julius Caesar* – are exercises in developing and cultivating a sense of “pagan virtue”.<sup>43</sup> This moral or pedagogical dimension is absent from Goethe’s understanding of the function of (auto)biography. Yet in at least one methodological respect, Plutarch shares a common approach with Goethe. In his introduction to his *Life of Alexander*, Plutarch expanded on the principle behind his biographies:

It is not Histories that I am writing, but Lives; and in the most illustrious deeds there is not always a manifestation of virtue or vice, nay, a slight thing like a phrase or a jest often makes a greater revelation of character than battles when thousands fall, or the greatest armaments, or sieges of cities.<sup>44</sup>

We might compare this sense for the significant detail with Goethe’s notion of the *aperçu*. For Goethe, the *aperçu* was a key epistemological tool. In his *History of the Theory of Colours*, he maintained that “everything in science depends on what one calls an *aperçu*, on becoming aware of what really underlies phenomena”, adding that “becoming aware in this way is infinitely fruitful”.<sup>45</sup> In his *Maxims and Reflections* (§696), Goethe notes that “a significant fact, an ingenious *aperçu*, occupies a very great number of people, first as they get to know about it, then as they come to understand it, work on it, and extend its scope”.<sup>46</sup> And in conversation with Riemer on 20 May 1819 Goethe went so far as to declare: “Everything depends on an *aperçu*. It is the highest thing a human being can achieve, and one cannot go further”.<sup>47</sup>

Furthermore, Plutarch also emphasises his strategy of carefully selecting the elements he uses to shape his biographies, highlighting (in his *Life of Aemilius Paulus*) the craftsmanship that lies behind his accounts (and, in so doing, implicitly comparing himself to Homer):

<sup>41</sup> Plu. *Aem.* 1.

<sup>42</sup> Hägg (2012: 239–281). For further discussion, see Duff (1999) and Pelling (1995).

<sup>43</sup> Casey (1990: 202–205).

<sup>44</sup> Plu. *Alex.* 1.

<sup>45</sup> Goethe, ed. Trunz (1960b: 98).

<sup>46</sup> Goethe, ed. Trunz (1960a: 477).

<sup>47</sup> Biedermann-Herwig (1998: 117).

For the result is like nothing else than daily living and associating together, when I receive and welcome each subject of my history in turn as my guest, so to speak, and observe carefully 'how large he was and of what mien' [cf. *Iliad*, 24.630], and select from his career what is most important and most beautiful to know.<sup>48</sup>

Hence there is also an implicit *aesthetic* dimension to Plutarch's project, and precisely this aesthetic element in his own is explicitly acknowledged in the title of Goethe's account of his life: *poetry* and truth.

#### 4 Plutarch's and Goethe's Shared Stance and Outlook

Perhaps the biggest difference between Goethe and Plutarch may be exemplified if we remember the fact that, as a philosopher, Plutarch is usually described as a Middle Platonist, that is, an adherent of Platonism as it developed as a tradition between Antiochus of Ascalon's rejection of the New Academy's teachings at the end of the first century BC and the Neoplatonic teachings of Plotinus in the middle of the third. For the last thirty years of his life, Plutarch also served at the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi in the function of one of the shrine's two priests. (In his dialogue *On the obsolescence of oracles*, Plutarch gave an account of how visitors to Delphi were led into a deep cave to consult the Oracle).<sup>49</sup> Indeed, Plutarch is said to have played an important role in the revival of this shrine at Delphi during the time of the emperors Trajan and Hadrian, as a result of which the citizens of Delphi, together with those of Chaeronea (the town in Boeotia where Plutarch had been born), jointly commissioned a portrait bust that was dedicated to him.

The Oracle was famous for its inscription on the Temple of Apollo, "know thyself", a topos of the pre-Socratic Western tradition that had become in the Enlightenment a well-known commonplace; the injunction was used, for example, as the motto to the *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde*, a periodical devoted to empirical psychology, which Karl Philipp Moritz (1756–1793) published from 1783 to 1793. By contrast, in a short essay called *Significant Help given by an Ingenious Turn of Phrase* of 1823, Goethe expressed his suspicion of the oracle's command:

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48 Plu. *Aem.* 1.

49 Plu. *De def. or.* 437C–438E. See also Plutarch's dialogue *De E.*

I must admit that I have long been suspicious of the great and important-sounding task: “know thyself” ... This has always seemed to me a deception practised by a secret order of priests who wished to confuse humanity with impossible demands, to divert attention from activity in the outer world to some false, inner speculation.<sup>50</sup>

This scepticism is voiced equally in two of Goethe’s “sayings” – “Know thyself! What does that mean?/It means: just be! and: don’t be!/It’s one of those sayings of the dear wise men,/Which, in short, contradicts itself!” (*Erkenne dich! – was soll das heißen? / Es heißt: sei nur! und sei auch nicht! / Es ist eben ein Spruch der lieben Weisen, / Der sich in Kürze widerspricht!*),<sup>51</sup> and “Know thyself! What good does that do me? / If I know myself, that won’t be so for long” (*Erkenne dich! – Was hab’ ich da für Lohn? / Erkenn’ ich mich, so muß ich gleich davon.*).<sup>52</sup> Indeed, this suspicion of the Oracle might well, over a century-and-a-half later, be extended to any narcissistic preoccupation of the modern self with itself, as well as be seen to mark a clear difference in philosophical outlook between Goethe and Plutarch.

To this extent, Goethe’s interest in Plutarch is largely focused on Plutarch’s role as a historian, magistrate, and ambassador, rather than his role as an initiate into the mysteries of Apollo, a priest at the temple in Delphi, and a Platonic philosopher. Yet, on the other hand, the principle that Goethe, in his essay *Significant Help given by an Ingenious Turn of Phrase*, goes on to propound – that “the human being knows himself only insofar as he knows the world; he perceives the world only in himself, and himself only in the world”<sup>53</sup> – in fact corresponds to the second, and far less well-known, part of the Temple inscription: “Know thyself – and thou shalt know all the mysteries of the gods and of the universe”.<sup>54</sup>

So although his explicit references to Plutarch are relatively scarce, what Goethe seems to have above all appreciated in Plutarch will have been the universality of Plutarch’s outlook, reflected in his work as a magistrate and administrator (like Goethe himself in Weimar) in Chaeronea. During his lifetime, Plutarch attained to a celebrity that stretched across the Roman empire, a status that saw him receiving guests in his country estate for conversations over which he presided, in much the same way as Goethe hosted lunches and

<sup>50</sup> Goethe, ed. and trans. Miller (1995: 39).

<sup>51</sup> Goethe, ed. Nicolai (1995: 634).

<sup>52</sup> Goethe, ed. Nicolai (1995: 635).

<sup>53</sup> Goethe, ed. and trans. Miller (1995: 39).

<sup>54</sup> Shuré (1906: 108–109). See also Wilkins (1917).

dinners in his house on the Frauenplan in Weimar. And Plutarch's belief in the possibility of learning from (and hence for the need for an engagement with) the past is reflected in Goethe's own sentiments, well summed-up in the quatrain from the *West-Eastern Divan* (*West-östlicher Divan*), that: "Those who cannot draw conclusions / From three thousand years of learning / Stay naïve in dark confusions, / Day to day live undiscerning" (*Wer nicht von dreitausend Jahren / Sich weiß Rechenschaft zu geben, / Bleib im Dunkeln unerfahren, / Mag von Tag zu Tage leben*).<sup>55</sup>

Finally, it is significant that both Plutarch and Goethe were themselves regarded in the twentieth century as important figures by the adherents of the so-called "George Circle", the group of followers based around the charismatic German poet, Stefan George (1868–1933).<sup>56</sup> In a conversation with Edith Landmann (1877–1951) in 1924, George claimed that he had read Plutarch's *Lives* around three hundred times (!).<sup>57</sup> While the exact figure is not important, the statement serves as an indicator of the significance George attached to Plutarch as a representative figure. Yet George could be critical too: for instance, he disapproved of Plutarch's treatise *On reading the poets*, describing it as "bad joke". At the same time George also relativised this response, pointing to one of Plutarch's moralising remarks and commenting that, in Plutarch's time, such remarks had been necessary and that, prior to him, they had been a matter of course.<sup>58</sup> It seems that what George most appreciated about Plutarch (as he did about Tacitus) was Plutarch's eye for detail, not just about war, but about its portents,<sup>59</sup> and he regarded Plutarch as the Eckermann of the age of antiquity, albeit as someone who himself was full of antiquity's power.<sup>60</sup> George recommended that all fourteen to sixteen-year-old boys read Plutarch in his entirety, from beginning to end,<sup>61</sup> and what would have made Plutarch attractive to George and the members of his circle was the emphasis in the *Lives* on the notion of the "great man".

This notion proved to be a major theme in the historiographies of the German Idealist philosopher G.W.F. Hegel (1770–1831), the Scottish essayist and historian Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), and the American essayist and "Transcendentalist" Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882, see Klotz in this

<sup>55</sup> Goethe, trans. Whaley (1998: 189).

<sup>56</sup> Trittle (1995).

<sup>57</sup> Landmann (1963:126).

<sup>58</sup> Landmann (1963: 72).

<sup>59</sup> Landmann (1963: 128).

<sup>60</sup> Landmann (1963: 132).

<sup>61</sup> Landmann (1963: 140).

volume), as well as in those of the Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt (1818–1897) and of his contemporary, Nietzsche; and indeed – as we have seen – Goethe himself. In the end, the influence of Plutarch on Goethe is to be found less in any specific influence, whether in his scientific writings, in his maxims and aphorisms, or in the Mothers Scene of *Faust*, Part 2, than in a notion common to Plutarch and to Goethe. Namely, that greatness is always a matter of an individual, from which conclusion there arises the vast programme of *Bildung* or education, a programme in which both writers themselves used, until quite recently, to be a prominent feature.

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# Plutarch and Adamantios Koraes

*Sophia Xenophontos*

## 1 Introduction: Adamantios Koraes and his Context

This chapter sets out to examine Plutarch's revival in the period of the modern Greek Enlightenment and, more specifically, to elucidate his impact on the work and thought of the humanist intellectual Adamantios Koraes (1748–1833). After completing his early education in his native town of Smyrna – at the time a flourishing trading centre of the Ottoman Empire – Koraes travelled to Montpellier to study medicine.<sup>1</sup> Some years later, in 1788, he moved to Paris, a city that inspired him both politically and philosophically.<sup>2</sup> There not only did he experience in practice the humanist ideals that engendered the French revolution, such as political liberalism and justice,<sup>3</sup> he also interacted within a cultural setting that was permeated by the principles of the Enlightenment, especially rationalism and scientific rigour. Despite living abroad, his home country and the vision of a liberated Greece (still subject to the Sultan) remained a source of angst for Koraes, but also a strong motivation for radical change.

Early nineteenth-century travellers' accounts, written by Europeans visiting Greece, present Greek education as antiquated and sharply focused on ecclesiastical teaching rather than secular studies.<sup>4</sup> Koraes believed that educational reforms were required by all means in order to ensure both national rebirth and political autonomy. And he emphatically argued that it was only

\* This chapter is a more concise version of my previous work on Plutarch and Koraes, drawing on my article Xenophontos (2014) and my chapter Xenophontos (2013), to which I refer the reader for more extensive treatments. With this chapter, my aim is to provide an easily accessible overview of Plutarch's influence on Adamantios Koraes, in line with the aims of the present volume.

- 1 On Koraes' medical education, see Argyropoulos (2010: 192–199) and Nikolaou (1984).
- 2 On Koraes and politics, see Noutsos (1984), Charalambides (2002). On the various phases of Koraes' political thought, see Kitromilides (1984).
- 3 Woodhouse (1984: esp. 216–217); cf. Kitromilides (1996: 251–287).
- 4 On the state of learning, education, and culture in Greece in this period, see Angelomatis-Tsakourakis (1990: 118–145), Brewer (2010: 99, 105, 110–118, 124, 168); cf. Runciman (1968: 208–225) on education in the early centuries of the Ottoman Empire.

through emulating and restoring classical *paideia* that Greeks would become autonomous.<sup>5</sup> With that in mind, he turned to editing a vast array of classical texts, mostly those that were heavily didactic in character: Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Isocrates, Xenophon, and of course Plutarch are just a few representative examples. This is Koraes' editorial project entitled the *Hellenic Library* (*Hellēnikē Vivliothēkē*), published in Paris between 1805 and 1827.<sup>6</sup>

Koraes began his editions of these classical texts with extensive *Prolegomena* that normally took the form of *Impromptu Reflections* (*Autoschedioi Stochasmoi*).<sup>7</sup> These were not traditional editorial formalities, but rather precepts which he wished to communicate to his compatriots, a kind of cultural and socio-political commentary.<sup>8</sup> In the light of the above, Koraes' *Prolegomena* to his editions of Plutarch are the best places to look if we want to explore the manner in which he employs the ancient author in his vision of a *paidēia* for the renascent nation. In this chapter, I shall first consider how the biographical profile that Koraes establishes for Plutarch functions as an allusive self-characterisation, one that positions him as Plutarch's successor in modern times. In the second section, I will argue that Koraes emulates Plutarch's political notion of *philotimia* (translatable as "love of honour") by shifting it to his concept of *philarchia* and adapting it to the demands of the contemporary political setting. Finally, the third section will discuss the rationale behind his choice of Plutarchan heroes, whom Koraes describes in etchings/prints prefixed to his editions of Plutarch.

<sup>5</sup> This is encapsulated in his belief in *metakenōsis*, expanded upon in the edition of the sixth volume of Plutarch's *Lives* (1814: 561–562), and excellently summarised by Sherrard (1959: 180). For Koraes, the ancestral glory began with the Archaic period, reached its peak in the Classical period, and ended with the late Empire. Influenced by Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–1788), Koraes was negative about the Byzantine era, considering it a period of barbarism; see Mackridge (1998: 49–56), Beaton (2008a: 6–8), Mackridge (2010: 107–108); cf. Toynbee (1981: 139–154), Agapitos (1992), and Politis (1998).

<sup>6</sup> On Koraes and his attempts at improving the educational system, see Henderson (1971: 142–158), Belia (1984); cf. Clogg (1976: 118–146), Malaphantis (2001: 15–45).

<sup>7</sup> The *Prolegomena* could either take the form of dialogues of the Platonic type, narratives, protreptic forewords, or epistolary texts.

<sup>8</sup> *Prolegomena* 1, p. 250. Kitromilides (2010: 16), Droulia (1984: 221–222), Kalospyros (2006: 296–301), Evrigenis (2010: 94–108), Kitromilides (1996: 394–402). See also Moudoukoutas (2010: 234), who sees the *Hellenic Library* as the application of the theory of progress in practice.

## 2 Ethical Pedagogy: Plutarch as a Model for Koraes in Nineteenth-Century Greece

Koraes edited Plutarch's *Parallel lives* in six volumes between 1809 and 1814. At the start of his *Prolegomena* to the first of these volumes he stresses the concept of cultural improvement that he envisages for Greeks. He constantly speaks of the *prokopē* ("progress"), *prochōrēsis* ("betterment"), *apo tou kakou eis to kalon metabolē* ("change from bad to good"), *anagennēsis* ("rebirth") of his nation (*ethnos*).<sup>9</sup> On this basis, Koraes puts forward his idea of progressivism, so as to hearten his compatriots; but he does not want to get down to his main editorial task before providing his readers with a brief overview of Plutarch's life and work.

In drawing up his biographical account of Plutarch, Koraes is particularly selective. First, he concentrates on Plutarch's place of birth, the well-known Chaeronea in Boeotia. According to Koraes, everyone who is knowledgeable about Greek history feels sad on hearing the name of this town, because this is where the Athenians were defeated by Philip of Macedon (he refers, of course, to the battle of 338 BC).<sup>10</sup> But, as he goes on to say, at the same time one should rejoice, because this is where the admirable (*thaumastos*) Plutarch had been born, "who consoled Greece, which was enslaved first by the Macedonians and then by the Romans, and who ... turned her in a short period of time towards her ancient glory" (*Prolegomena* I, p. 371).<sup>11</sup> It is not difficult to catch a hint of converging eras and roles: just as Plutarch had undertaken the regeneration of his country's glory from what Koraes judged to be the constraints of slavery (*doulōtheisan Hellada*, *Prolegomena* I, p. 371),<sup>12</sup> might not Koraes seventeen centuries later be doing the same thing, given that throughout his work he described the Greece of his time as once again being "enslaved", in this case by the Turks?

That suggestion becomes more plausible if we read a few lines further down in Koraes' text. The ancient Boeotians were known for enjoying materialistic pleasures and they were publicly castigated as "stupid despisers of wisdom"

<sup>9</sup> All these terms are encountered in the *Prolegomena* of Plutarch's *Lives*, edition of 1809, entitled "Improvised reflections on Greek education and language". Koraes' views on the constant development of the human race draw on the corresponding ideas of Condorcet on human progressivism, on which see Mourdoukoutas (2010). Argyropoulos (2010: 187–192) makes some good observations on this.

<sup>10</sup> See, for instance, Politis (1998: 1) on the view that 338 BC conventionally marked the end of Greek independence.

<sup>11</sup> All translations of Koraes' texts are my own.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Koraes, *Prolegomena* I, p. 375 with his note 3.

(*ēlithioi kataphronētai tēs sophias, Prolegomena 1*, p. 371). Koraes inserts this point into his account in order to show that, in a town where people are widely *adoxoi* (“devoid of glory”), men who are genuinely useful to the human race can easily shine. It is such men who become “paradigms of virtue for their fellow-citizens”, men who “somehow cover their country’s lack of glory with their own” (*Prolegomena 1*, pp. 371–372). Koraes is most probably playing with phrase construction here and he has given careful thought to his choice of words out of a wish to subtly sketch himself as a modern Plutarch. While clearly referring to Boeotia in this context, he not only talks of an inglorious town (*polis*), as one might expect, but also of an inglorious nation (*ethnos*). *Ethnos* is the word he employs throughout when referring to contemporary Greece, as we have already observed. And in this very nation that needs to be re-educated in line with the principles of classical *paideia*, Koraes’ paradigmatic contribution, just like Plutarch’s own in ancient times, was to be easily acknowledged.

Koraes, however, hurries to stress the difficulties such paradigms face in being models for others and he notes that the true achievement of such men is revealed after their death, if their country lapses into its previous state of *adoxia* (*Prolegomena 1*, p. 372). This shows the rarity of noble men, who, in Koraes’ words, were “not born, but fell to earth from the sky above”, just as “in Chaeronea there was no new Plutarch to succeed our own Plutarch” (*Prolegomena 1*, p. 372). On the surface Koraes wants to underline the significance of Plutarchan moralism for the moral training of Plutarch’s readers by disclaiming any pretensions to being like Plutarch himself, at least at first glance. Yet this is not a sincere *recusatio*. I take it as no coincidence that, despite his observation that no new Plutarch ever succeeded their Plutarch, Koraes’ contemporary correspondents and biographers used to call him another Plutarch even in his lifetime. The case of Athanasios Parios is indicative: assessing Koraes’ philological prowess and praising him for his love of truth, Athanasios deems Koraes “the only one of our generation worthy to be called another Plutarch of Chaeronea ...”. The above quote comes from Athanasios’ 1802 *Apologētikon*,<sup>13</sup> thus making a strong case for the notion that Koraes was familiar with the phrase well before completing his edition of the first volume of Plutarch’s *Lives* in 1809 in which he sees himself as a modern Plutarch.

In presenting the biography of Plutarch to his readers, Koraes was building a targeted political agenda. This can also be deduced from the manner in which he conceptualises the relationship between the Greek and the Roman

<sup>13</sup> In Sathas (1868: 637–638); found also in Mamoukas (1989: 112–113 = pp. ριβ'–ριγ'). On Koraes' profound philological *paideia*, see Perraky (2010) and Tabaki (2010); Christodoulou (1984) and Kalospyros (2006) on Koraes as a textual critic; cf. Paschalidis (2010).

worlds of Plutarch's time. The Roman conquest of Greece is widely perceived less in the light of a tyranny and more as a mutual interaction between the two peoples, which culminated in the creation of a new code of cultural identity: whether one was a Hellene or not was determined not by criteria of ethnic origin but of cultural affiliation, so that many Romans or other non-Greeks who nevertheless attained Hellenic *paideia* were considered by Imperial authors, including Plutarch himself, as (culturally) Hellenes.<sup>14</sup>

In other cases Koraes seems to share this view of Hellenism as something based on Hellenic, that is ethical, education and not origins. Two very illuminating examples of this are found in the *Prolegomena* to the third volume of Plutarch's *Lives* of 1811, (pp. 482 and 484 respectively), where the Romans, compared to the savagery of Pyrrhus the Epirote king, are shown to have prudence – normally a Hellenic trait, and where in a contrast between two Asian kings, Orodes and Artabazus, Koraes evaluates the latter as the more Hellenic (*hellēnikōteros*) on the grounds that he composed tragedies and historical narratives in Greek.

In writing Plutarch's biography, Koraes similarly accepts Plutarch's visits to Rome, his interactions with noble Roman officials, and in general the cultural affinity of the Graeco-Roman world (pp. 374–376), but he continues to define the political status of Greece of that time in terms of slavery (*hē talaipōros Hellas edoulōthē eis tous Rhōmaious*, p. 375), as we have seen above. In addition to that, he elegantly introduces the element of opposition and even of enmity (e.g. *hoi echthroi tou genous*, p. 375, note 3) between the two peoples by mentioning that the Romans, unable to conform to the superb levels of Greek virtue and wisdom, invented derogatory names for Greeks, calling them *Graeculi* (pp. 375–376, with note 3). Such broad associations might seem oversimplifications to modern tastes and they show how Koraes appropriates his rhetoric in his description of the Roman Empire in order to make it an exact parallel to that of the contemporary Ottoman Empire, at least in the way he himself perceived it. With such clear-cut comparisons, he can easily define his own role in modern times as a counterpart to that of Plutarch in ancient times: i.e. under foreign “dominion” national educators are tasked with regaining the liberty of their peoples.

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<sup>14</sup> Mainly Jones (1971: 48–64, 122–130), Swain (1996), Pelling (1989), Whitmarsh (2001), and Whitmarsh (2010). See also the paper by Beaton (2007) on how the term “Hellene” is defined in twelfth-century Byzantium and the mid-nineteenth century.

### 3 Political Pedagogy: Plutarch's *philotimia* and Koraes' *philarchia*

As we have seen in the previous section, in his *Prolegomena* to the *Lives* Koraes emphasised the cultural and moral *paideia* of his countrymen, who were still under Ottoman rule. Some ten years after the edition of the last volume of the *Lives*, in 1824, Koraes returned to Plutarch to edit his five political treatises, a choice that seems to tie in with the immense changes taking place on the Greek political scene. This was the third year of the Greek War of Independence, the Greeks had already achieved a number of important military victories, but in 1823 civil war broke out in the form of a competition for power and the leadership of the insurgency and ultimately of the emerging Greek state.<sup>15</sup> Under the circumstances, Koraes wished to discourage the Greeks from hostilities of any kind and to sensitise them to vital civic values, such as concord and communal collaboration.

Plutarch is once again a useful means to this end. In the edition's introductory note addressed to readers, Koraes reminds them of Plutarch, who in his *Political precepts* urged his fellow-citizens, at that time "slaves to the Romans" (p. 111), to spare themselves the evils of *dichonoria* ("discord") and *kolakeia* ("flattery") and not to "increase the burden of the yoke of slavery by other enmities" (p. 111). Again Koraes' careful rhetoric, which matches his self-projection, seems to be in play; his classifications of "Greek slavery under the Romans" and "Greek slavery under the Ottomans" are closely linked a few lines below:

Modern Greeks could justifiably boast more than Plutarch's contemporaries, when freed from the yoke of the savage tyrant, compared to which the Roman yoke could rightly be considered a luxury, and after they gain their freedom, they are willing to maintain it ...<sup>16</sup>

Koraes is about to assume Plutarch's persona in modern times and to offer similar instructions in the current difficult situation. But, as we shall see in due course, Koraes' perception of his ancient role model has now developed, as he is particularly interested in those aspects of Plutarch's ethics concerned with the ideals of a harmonious civic co-existence; Koraes' compatriots now urgently needed an education in proper citizenship.

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<sup>15</sup> E.g. Brewer (2001: 181–193, 226–233).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. "after the nation was enslaved, first to the Romans, then to the Turks, it lost its country", *Prolegomena* III, p. 151; "out of the hands of these despots more savage despots, the Turks, seized us, ..." , *Prolegomena* III, p. 152.

For Koraes, political liberty is inextricably associated with moral education, and so his introductory note is imbued with the concept of *diorthōsis ēthous* ("the correction of mores", e.g. *Prolegomena* III, p. 230), which is contrasted to the more frequent *phthora ēthous* ("moral destruction", *Prolegomena* III, pp. 183, 196). Both these notions are counterparts to Plutarch's most basic ethical categories of moral improvement and moral deterioration respectively.<sup>17</sup> Koraes' *diorthōsis ēthous* arguably recalls Plutarch's classical *epanorthōsis ēthous*, which is treated mainly in the programmatic statements of *Aemilius* 1.1–5 outlining the quintessence of Plutarch's biographical production; he has composed the *Parallel lives* of glorious men to improve the ethical state of both his audience and himself (*pros epanorthōsin ēthōn*, *Aem.* 1.3). On the other hand, Koraes' *phthora ēthous* brings to mind those instances of moral deterioration that Plutarch gives us in his case-studies of character change (*metabolē*). One recalls, for instance, the case of Marius, that fierce and courageous soldier who in old age was troubled by terrible dreams and who, because of the dreadful persecution he suffered at the hands of his enemies, eventually resorted to excessive drinking (*Mar.* 45.5–12). Or the case of Lucullus, who after having attained great power and fame, later on abandoned his political career for the sake of a life of leisure (*Luc.* 38). In both instances, the hero's moral deterioration is advanced by Plutarch as the result of his flawed *paideia*, which had not been able to tame his basest passions. In similar fashion, when Koraes offers political advice to his fellow Greeks he is constantly alert to the dangers of a defective education that could undermine their national goals: "what predominantly contributes to the preservation of freedom is the dissemination of *paideia* throughout the nation and the proper raising of the young" (p. 112).

Though Koraes' introductory note is informed by Plutarch's political ethics, its main emphasis corresponds to the troubles of his own age. The *Prolegomena* to Plutarch's political essays is a spectacular dialogue of the Platonic type, entitled *Peri tōn Hellēnikōn Sympherontōn Dialogos* (*Dialogue Regarding the Interests of Greece*). Two constructed figures, Philarchos and Phyxarchos, expound their opinions about men who pursue public office or honorific titles. The former are called *philarchoi* or occasionally *philoprōtoi*, the latter *titlomaneis*, but all of them are accounted "bad citizens" (*kakoi politai*, *Prolegomena* III, p. 121).

In the course of the dialogue, Phyxarchos deems *philarchia* a most perilous passion that needs to be tamed through correct training, so as not to cause dreadful calamities to the country (*Prolegomena* III, p. 121). This reminds us of the well-known theory of the great natures, as articulated mainly in Plato's

<sup>17</sup> See Xenophontos (2016: 22–41).

*Republic* (*Resp.* 491e–492a);<sup>18</sup> this is a concept Plutarch espouses, and the most representative illustration of it within his work is perhaps provided by Alcibiades, an example that Koraes himself employs very frequently in the *Prolegomena* to his edition of Plutarch's *Lives*.<sup>19</sup> However good a man's natural background may be, if he does not receive the proper kind of *paideia*, his ethical deterioration is an ever present danger. Koraes points to the examples of those "Agamemnons, Achilleses and Ajaxes" (i.e. to naturally endowed men), who were capable of both great virtues as well as great vices (*Prolegomena* III, p. 121) depending on the kind of training they receive.<sup>20</sup>

Taking that for granted, Koraes suggests – through the mouth of Philarchos this time – that every one of his Greek contemporaries should always remember that he was one of a group of equals, brothers (*Prolegomena* III, p. 121), and in no case was it "fair to sacrifice their prosperity for the sake of his own passions" (*Prolegomena* III, p. 121).<sup>21</sup> Phyxarchos agrees and adduces an example to support Philarchos' reference to a great nature gone bad: that of Napoleon Bonaparte. Both interlocutors attribute Napoleon's perverted absolutism to his untamed *doxomania* (*Prolegomena* III, p. 122),<sup>22</sup> which had not been regulated by proper *paideia*. Like Plutarch, Koraes is sensitive to the idea of a political figure whose public activity needed to be accompanied by proper ethical guidance. In the case of Koraes, when this political figure happens to be Napoleon himself, there are further ramifications to consider.

When Napoleon had begun his grand expeditions in the Mediterranean (1797–1805), Koraes pinned all his hopes for the emancipation of the Greek people on a provisional alliance between France and Greece,<sup>23</sup> often envisaging Napoleon as the liberator of the Greek nation. However, when the French

<sup>18</sup> A notion also presented in *Cri.* 44d, *Hp. mi.* 375e, *Grg.* 525e. Cf. Xenophon's *Memorabilia* 4.1.3.

<sup>19</sup> Note 1, pp. 365–366; pp. 399–400.

<sup>20</sup> Koraes associates this point with an explicit reference to Plato's *Republic* in the remarks he makes in his *scholium A*, p. 249.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Prolegomena* IV (*Atakta*), p. 431, where Koraes defines *philarchia* as the swaggering tendency of a person to repress his "brothers/compatriots".

<sup>22</sup> Elsewhere called *titlomania* ("love of offices") (p. 129), *oiēsis* ("self-conceit"), *alēthinē epilēpsia* ("genuine epilepsy"), *hiera nosos* ("sacred disease") (p. 133). Within the dialogue *philarchia* is also given a Christian dimension as by being paralleled with "original sin" (*propatorikon hamartēma*) and the "snake" (*ophis*) (p. 131).

<sup>23</sup> For this reason Koraes published several anonymous polemical pamphlets in which he urged the Greeks to assist the French in their campaigns of liberation; in his *Martial Anthem* (*Asma Polemistérion*) (1800), he speaks of this alliance using the term *Graikogalloi* ("Graeco-French"); cf. Gregoriadou (2002: 23–26). Elsewhere he envisions a "Graeco-French democracy" (*Graikogallikē dēmokratia*), *Allilographia* I, p. 282. See also his *A Call to Arms* (*Salpisma Polemistérion*) (1801) and *Mémoire* (1803).

political line moved towards despotism and after Napoleon's rapprochement with Russia at Tilsit in 1807 Koraes became disillusioned. In his *Autobiography* (χε'), Koraes highlights the fact that, despite being admirably equipped with natural endowments, Napoleon was totally led astray by a number of ill-judged and harmful predilections, and he refers bitterly to Napoleon's political mistakes, which stemmed from his uncontrollable wish to govern Europe and succumbing to flattery.<sup>24</sup>

Plutarch is thus keen to deal with public men whose lack of moral capital often led to perilous political failings and ultimately to their personal downfall. Although he sketches a number of such instances in the *Lives*, Koraes chose the case of Caesar in particular. Caesar's *paideia* was exclusively intellectual and this impeded him from understanding the meaning of equality before the law (*isonomia*, *Prolegomena* III, p. 168). Furthermore, Caesar claimed to be of divine origin so as to reinforce his public impact; he was blinded by honours and supreme office, gathered all political power in his own hands, and often resorted to bribery and flattery. All these, Koraes argues (*Prolegomena* III, p. 169), were the "bitter fruits of *philarchia*", which – detached as they had been from the *paideia* of the heart – rendered Caesar a virtual demagogue (p. 173).<sup>25</sup> The association with Plutarch's original is interesting, because Plutarch too refers to Caesar's conceited emphasis on political and military power rather than on the regulation of that power through rhetorical training (*Caes.* 3). Caesar's lack of proper education led to his vanity and to the imposition of his dictatorship, as Plutarch bluntly concludes (*Caes.* 7.1–2, 11.3, 17.1–4, 22.6, 54.4–5, 58.4–6).

Everything that we have observed so far about untamed passions and love of honour in Koraes encourages us to recall Plutarch's *philotimia* and its cognates of *philon(e)ikia*, *philodoxia*, *philoprotia*, and occasionally even *philarchia*. As one of the most central concepts to Plutarch's political mindset and a recurrent theme especially in the *Lives*, *philotimia* has an interesting semantic flexibility; the term is a *media vox*, but Plutarch uses its negative meaning three times as often as the positive meaning. The equivalent, therefore, of Koraes' (wholly negative) *philarchia* should be Plutarch's *philotimia* with the negative connotations it has throughout Plutarch's texts.<sup>26</sup>

At the end of the dialogue, Philarchos and Phyxarchos express the shared hope that Greece will attain happiness and peace; the two interlocutors

<sup>24</sup> See also *Atakta* III, p. 351, n. 1, where Koraes speaks of the blood-thirsty despot Napoleon.

<sup>25</sup> In the same vein, Koraes stresses elsewhere that it is the ethical *paideia* of the soul that alone is capable of safeguarding liberal feelings (*Prolegomena* III, p. 230).

<sup>26</sup> Stadter (2011) explores the positive and negative accomplishment of competitiveness in Plutarch. See also Roskam *et al.* (eds) (2012) for a more detailed treatment.

overcome any disagreements that may have arisen during their exchange and agree to return to new, stimulating discussions in the future, should the desired concord among Greeks not come to fruition. Koraes elegantly rounds off the dialogue with the idea that has been uppermost in his mind throughout: through Phyxarchos he discourages his intended audience from office-seeking and from giving their votes in the pending elections to men who were after public office. In a similar vein, Plutarch finishes his *Political precepts* by urging his readers to political discretion, mildness, and avoiding disputes provoked by public rivalries (*philotimiai*) in the course of political engagement. Koraes' *philarchia*, projected throughout in accordance with Plutarch's negative *philotimia*, becomes a key aspect in Koraes' political theory of a well-governed, modern Greek state.

#### 4 Cultural Pedagogy: Plutarch's Barbarians and their "domestication" through Hellenic Education

Koraes illustrates the edition of the third volume of Plutarch's *Lives* (1811) with a series of etchings/prints. The interplay between the conventional elements of Plutarch's heroes and the contemporary nuances with which Koraes invests them is particularly interesting. The most striking feature in the choices he makes concerning this group of heroes is that all of them are traditionally non-Greeks. This will be important as regards the manner in which Koraes thinks of national identity.

His first print is that of Pyrrhus, the Epirote king, who despite his military prowess was not successful in confronting the Romans, since, as Koraes explains, he lacked their prudence (*phronēsis*, *Prolegomena* I, p. 482). Koraes goes on to emphasise that if Pyrrhus had possessed Roman prudence, he would have been able not only to devastate the military forces of the Romans but also to "crush the yoke that they were preparing to impose on the neck of Greece" (p. 482).

A discordant aspect in Pyrrhus' case is that the Romans, who up till then had been considered "the enemy" in Koraes' *Prolegomena*, paralleling the Ottoman overlords, are now presented as prudent men. It is worth noting, however, that Koraes brings out the prudence of the Romans only to stress that the Epirote king did not possess the same sort of virtue. We should start at this point to become aware of a shift in the way Koraes thinks of the Romans; they are the bearers of those moral principles that Pyrrhus ought to have possessed, and that explains why they ranked highly in Koraes' estimation. This is consistent with what I intend to argue below, i.e. that when drawing a distinction between

Hellenes and barbarians, Koraes set as criteria the possession of the values of classical *paideia* and of the ideals of the Enlightenment. As in Plutarch's own conception of Hellenism, someone's actual origins were not of great importance, provided that they displayed proper ethical conduct.

This is further attested by the next pair of prints, which are those of Marius and Sulla. The two Romans were "polluted by the blood of their fellow citizens" (p. 482) and in their case philosophy itself "wept", because Marius had neglected the Hellenic *paideia*, which would have transformed his savageness, and because Sulla had spent his youthful years in depraved surroundings and not in the company of prudent men, who could have restrained his wildness. Whereas in Pyrrhus' case the Romans are depicted as prudent men and shown in a more favourable light, both Marius and Sulla, although Romans themselves, are presented by Koraes as far removed from the Hellenic education that could have tamed them. So in their case, it is not only their Roman origins but also their lack of Hellenic mores that reduced them to a state of savage barbarism.

Next comes the print of Sophocles. Koraes breaks the sequence of Plutarchan figures and inserts the example of the tragic poet, stressing that Sophoclean tragedies were at the time being staged in the theatres of enlightened, European nations. How exactly Sophocles fits here is an issue that will be discussed below. After the print of Sophocles, Koraes returns to his Plutarchan heroes and inserts the print of the Asian despot, Mithridates. Mithridates is not the subject of a *Life*, but nevertheless features prominently in *Sulla*, *Lucullus*, and *Pompey*, a group of Roman *Lives* in which Hellenism and *paideia* are overarching themes. Koraes gives a multiplicity of versions in order to show the significance of proper *paideia*, and so in Mithridates' case he mentions that, although he was indeed endowed with Hellenic culture (of the sort that Marius and Sulla lacked), he was not tamed by it, as he had not had the benefit of an equally proper upbringing in early life (p. 483). The notion of youthful nurture itself is reminiscent of Alcibiades' Socratic apprenticeship, discussed in other instances in the *Prolegomena*, and this is supported by the fact that Koraes touches directly on the vital role of a person's surroundings and in particular of exemplary models. Human passions, he notes, change in a variety of ways depending on the available models. So he argues that "neither would I have dared guarantee Socrates' mildness if he had been born in Pontus, nor would I have considered the baseness of Mithridates, king of Pontus, incurable, if he had seen the light of Athens" (p. 483).

The print of Mithridates is followed by that of Euripides, whose eminence is attested not only by his contribution to his fellow citizens (he is said to have saved them through the sweetness of his poems, p. 483), but also by the fact

that a century later Philemon, the comic poet, admired him to such an extent that he wished to die prematurely so as to meet him in the underworld. Koraes makes use of the classical theme of Philemon as one of Euripides' emulators and transposes it to his own day, by referring to Euripides' *Nachleben* in the works of the French dramatist Racine. Here Koraes talks about how the milieu of the French Enlightenment emulated the Greek legacy on a cultural level. At the same time, however, I believe that the reference to the revival of both Sophocles and Euripides in this framework of ethical reform and cultural emulation implies something more than that. In his educational theory, Koraes admonishes his compatriots to appreciate the pedagogical significance of theatrical performances and opera (*Prolegomena* III, pp. 217–223); thus it seems plausible that he was envisaging here the staging of Greek tragedies as civilising forces, a sort of cultural *paideia* for both the ancient and contemporary world.

The king of the Parthians, Orodes, is the subject of the seventh print in the sequence. He was called king of kings, was a barbarian despot, but at the same time a Philhellene, an admirer of Euripides' tragedies (p. 484). The next etching is that of Artabazus, the king of Armenia, who was Orodes' contemporary and friend. Yet interestingly the former was considered by Koraes (following Plutarch's lead) more Hellenic than the latter (*hellēnikōteros*, p. 484) on the grounds that he wrote tragedies and historical accounts in Greek, as seen in the second section of this Chapter.

Koraes rounds off this sequence of prints very neatly. In the distant past, the wisdom of the two Asian tyrants was the product of their admiration for Hellenic civilisation; in ancient times even non-Greeks could be regarded as culturally Greeks if they endorsed Hellenic values. In the present day, however, Koraes deliberately (over)states the contention that French people of his day simply could not match the superb standards of the Greek past: the French language had not yet reached the level that Greek had once achieved; the tragedies of Racine had not yet been staged in any Asian royal court; not a single Asian despot had so far agreed to learn French (p. 484).

Koraes is confident about the uniqueness of the Greek heritage, although he does seem to exaggerate, consumed as he is by patriotic zeal. The French were certainly not as inferior as he claims them to be, but his attempts to boost his compatriots' national awareness are so insistent that he was perhaps left with no other option than to use this extreme, highly ethnic rhetoric. In fact, his concluding admonition to the Greeks reveals more clearly that Koraes' problem was not with French cultural "inferiority", but had more to do with a suspicion that his compatriots might show themselves less worthy than the Parthians and the Armenians in their appreciation of their ancestral glory:

Oh, young friends of Greece! Consider whose descendants you are, consider that your nobleness surpasses all the admirable noblenesses of the world, and be careful not to appear unworthy of such a huge and great nobleness, if you do not show at all the kind of emulation that the wild Parthians and Armenians showed for Greek wisdom (pp. 484–485).

## 5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined how Adamantios Koraes appropriated his readings of Plutarch to the process of creating a modern Greek national identity in the early nineteenth century. In the first section, I have shown that, when Koraes presents the biography of Plutarch to his audience, he constructs a self-conscious agenda on the basis of which he delineates himself as an heir of Plutarch. Just like his forerunner in ancient times, Koraes considers it his national duty to become an educator of his people, both by teaching them the values of a classical education and by instilling in them the ideal of devotion to one's country.

In the *Prolegomena* to Plutarch's *Lives* (1809–1814) Koraes is primarily concerned with the moralising aspects of Plutarch's thinking, the things needed to produce strong characters with integrity, matching the ethical credentials of their forefathers; prudence, erudition, and selectivity as steps to moral progress are all pointedly at issue. But in the *Prolegomena* to Plutarch's political essays it is clear that 1823, with its warring factions, marked a turning point in the manner in which Koraes perceived his national contribution. Their lives squandered in civil conflicts, Koraes' fellow countrymen were now in imperative need of political guidance, and so Koraes turns in particular to Plutarch's political ethics. Koraes' concept of *philarchia*, a modern derivative of Plutarch's own *philotimia*, as I have argued in the second section of this chapter, is carefully constructed so as to be particularly appealing to the audience for which he is writing; it would have touched the rawest of nerves in his readers, focusing their minds on the evils of self-centred office-seeking.

Koraes is also deeply preoccupied with the meaning of Hellenism, which, like Plutarch, he judges on the basis of ethical conduct and not of origin, as the group of prints from his edition of the third volume of Plutarch's *Lives* has shown. The feeling of national self-awareness is bolstered by Koraes' pointed emphasis on the notion that even the French of his own day had not yet attained the cultural and moral levels of the Hellenes of the past. As a patron of learning, Koraes adapted the thrust of Plutarch's educational theory to the requirements of the *paideia* of the nascent modern Greek state, as seen in the third section of this chapter. In trying to restore his country to its ancient

pre-eminence, Koraes was inspired by Plutarch's ethical, political, and cultural pedagogy. Seventeen centuries after Plutarch's time the philosopher from Chaeronea became a symbol for national rebirth.

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## Plutarch and the Victorians

*Isobel Hurst*

For nineteenth-century readers, Plutarch was a familiar name. In an 1873 essay in the *Fortnightly Review*, the classical scholar W.J. Brodribb comments that “no classical author is better known to the average modern reader than Plutarch”, and at the same time he is “hardly known except as a biographer”.<sup>1</sup> The frequent appearance of “Plutarch’s Lives” in the memoirs and novels of the period establishes the text as a familiar presence in Victorian homes, read in translation and representing an accessible version of the classical tradition. In a description of his classical reading as a child, John Stuart Mill recalls his “great delight” in the Langhorne version of Plutarch, which he read as a recreation. Engaged in an intensive study of Greek from the age of three, he read ancient history by himself and retold the stories to his father on their daily walks.<sup>2</sup> In Charles Dickens’ *Our Mutual Friend* (1865), it is one of the works of ancient history that the illiterate Mr Boffin, attempting to make up for his lack of education, hires Silas Wegg to read aloud. Boffin finds the *Lives* “extremely entertaining, though he hoped Plutarch might not expect him to believe them all”.<sup>3</sup> Allusions to Plutarch in Victorian literature demonstrate that texts other than the *Lives* were known to nineteenth-century readers, yet he is renowned principally as an influence on authors such as Shakespeare and Montaigne (see Dimitrova and Edelman in this volume) and on the heroes of the French and American revolutions, as a supplier of biographical anecdotes and a genial essayist. To scholars he was an enjoyable but unreliable historian (inferior to Herodotus or Thucydides). Such ideas affected the popular reception of Plutarch, who was excluded from series such as *Ancient Classics for English*

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<sup>1</sup> Brodribb (1873: 631). Although the model of paired biographies was rarely followed, “Plutarch” had become a shorthand for a biographer in the Romantic period. There was also a “modern British Plutarch”, a “Cambrian Plutarch” and a “Juvenile Plutarch”. The pairing of ancient heroes may have influenced Walter Savage Landor’s five volumes of *Imaginary conversations* (1824–1829), which take the form of prose dialogues rather than biographical studies. In the *Classical Dialogues* he pairs Greek with Greek and Roman with Roman. Nevertheless, the influence of Plutarch’s *Lives* is evident in dialogues such as “Diogenes and Plato”, “Lucian and Timotheus”, “Marcellus and Hannibal” and “Lucullus and Caesar”.

<sup>2</sup> Mill (1873: 7).

<sup>3</sup> Dickens (2008: 476), ed. Cotsell.

*Readers* (published by William Blackwood from 1870 onwards), which included volumes on Herodotus, Xenophon and Tacitus but no Plutarch.

In *Who Needs Greek?* (2002), Simon Goldhill traces the decline of Plutarch's reputation in the nineteenth century after a period of notable prominence in the late eighteenth century, as Plutarch's inaccuracies and second-hand knowledge were attacked by ancient historians.<sup>4</sup> Goldhill argues that scholarly neglect of Plutarch from 1850 onwards was influenced by the concerns of German scientific historical research, which prioritised originality and accuracy. Whereas Thucydides offered a contemporary perspective on the age of Pericles and made a point of accuracy, Plutarch wrote centuries later than many of the heroes he described and was regarded as "a corrupt and misleading collector of other sources".<sup>5</sup> Arthur Hugh Clough wrote in 1860 that Plutarch's *Lives* had been neglected in the last twenty years because readers had become increasingly interested in political history rather than character studies:

Plutarch wrote in the time of Trajan; and we have learnt the value of contemporary statements: it is justly felt that for the time of Pericles, his evidence is not to be compared to that of Thucydides. Plutarch is a biographer and a moralist; and our recent curiosity has been rather for the politics of the ancient world. Plutarch, in writing lives, to illustrate a point of character, very naturally neglects the order of time; but we have been busy to establish an accurate chronology.<sup>6</sup>

Franklin Lushington's 1860 review of Clough's version of the *Lives* observes that the "growing accuracy of the classical historians of the nineteenth century" and the "dispassionately sceptical habit of mind into which the modern student of Greek and Roman history is trained" have undermined Plutarch's "popularity and general esteem". He emphasises that the text is usually read in translation "even among first-rate classical scholars, ... except for the purpose of verifying the exact meaning of a particular passage, or satisfying their minds as to the alleged rhetorical crabbedness of the general style".<sup>7</sup> Plutarch's style is cited as a reason for scholarly neglect of the *Lives*: "their style so often deviates from the canons of Attic purity".<sup>8</sup> This made him one of the rare classical authors it was permissible for classically-educated men to read in English,

<sup>4</sup> Goldhill (2002: 246–293).

<sup>5</sup> Goldhill (2002: 285).

<sup>6</sup> Clough (1860: v).

<sup>7</sup> Lushington (1860: 261). Attributions of authorship of anonymous articles are from the *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, 1824–1900*.

<sup>8</sup> Donne (1860: 430–431).

although German scholars in the nineteenth century did produce new editions of Plutarch's works.

For many Victorians "Plutarch's Lives" meant the 1770 Langhorne version, the most broadly available option. North's version (see Lucchesi in this volume) was acknowledged as a Shakespearean source but there had been no new edition between 1676 and 1895, when the text was published in a series of Tudor translations.<sup>9</sup> Published in 1859, the five-volume *Plutarch's Lives: The Translation Called Dryden's. Corrected from the Greek and Revised by A.H. Clough* was widely read towards the end of the period. Clough aimed to restore Plutarch to the popularity he had once enjoyed, writing in a letter to an American correspondent, Charles Eliot Norton: "Plutarch is not sought for here as a library book; indeed, he is quite put out of fashion by Thirlwall, Grote & Co., and some effort is needed to recall attention to him".<sup>10</sup> However, his best hope was for an American readership: "I hope the young America will read it. Young England, I fear, is too critical, and thinks Plutarch an old fool".<sup>11</sup> Despite the low status of Plutarch in Britain, American readers continued to take Plutarch seriously. Ralph Waldo Emerson claimed that Plutarch was next in importance to Shakespeare and Plato.<sup>12</sup>

Plutarch occupies a unique place in literature as an encyclopædia of Greek and Roman antiquity. Whatever is eminent in fact or in fiction, in opinion, in character, in institutions, in science, – natural, moral or metaphysical, – or in memorable sayings, drew his attention and came to his pen with more or less fulness of record.<sup>13</sup>

The Boston booksellers Little and Brown offered Clough a fee of \$350 to revise Langhorne's Plutarch, and gave him a free hand with the translation. He decided instead to base his version on "Dryden's Plutarch", and worked on it from 1853 to 1857. During this time he was first engaged in classical tutoring and writing periodical articles, and later as a civil servant in the Education Office and secretary to the Nightingale Fund (responsible for money donated by the public in honour of Florence Nightingale's work in the Crimean War). He hoped to make the new version "tolerably readable and correct", although he felt that a complete retranslation would have been preferable:<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Whibley (1895).

<sup>10</sup> Clough (1869: 241).

<sup>11</sup> Clough (1869: 240).

<sup>12</sup> Goldhill (2002: 250–251).

<sup>13</sup> Emerson (1903: 297). See also Klotz in this volume.

<sup>14</sup> Clough (1869: 225).

It is odd how much better I like this Plutarch than I do anything which requires distinct statement of opinion or the like. That doesn't look very ambitious, does it? It bothers me a good deal, for mending up an old translation seems often like putting new wine into old bottles; and I was at my wits' end about what I should do, last Saturday: I thought all that I had yet done must be thrown away, and, that I must begin with another translation. They would hardly allow time; or else I could almost believe it would be best even for my own sake to spend time on translating it myself.<sup>15</sup>

Clough's version of Plutarch's *Lives* was published in Boston and London in 1859. He also prepared a one-volume selection for British schools, *Greek History from Themistocles to Alexander, in a Series of Lives from Plutarch* (1860). Norton commented that the project "turned out to involve little less labor than a complete new translation, and it was so accomplished that henceforth it must remain the standard version of this most popular of the ancient authors".<sup>16</sup> James Hannay also praised Clough for the painstaking thoroughness of his revisions, claiming that "He has, throughout, employed the best recent texts, to secure the exactness of meaning dear to scholarship". Clough had not merely updated the language of the translation but "rebuilt it, so to speak – and with a constant eye to the edifice of the Greek architect of which it is a copy – cleaning here, restoring there, and touching up everywhere".<sup>17</sup>

Articles responding to Clough's version of the *Lives* represent Plutarch not as a "scholar's author" but "popular everywhere" and "as well known in translation as he was in the classical world".<sup>18</sup> W.B. Donne's article on "Plutarch and his Times" in the *Westminster Review* (1860) begins by stating "A revised translation of Plutarch's *Lives* may seem a doubtful experiment at a time when the kind of heroism he portrays is out of date" and his philosophical maxims little regarded. However, Donne goes on to argue for the influence of the *Lives* as "for centuries the manual of men great in arts or arms", far exceeding the impact of Thucydides, Aristotle, Livy or Polybius.<sup>19</sup> Brodribb claims that Plutarch's age was one in which biography was particularly popular and theorises that this was due to the "extraordinary importance with which imperialism had invested a single man. History, if not identified with, was at least of necessity

<sup>15</sup> Clough (1869: 195).

<sup>16</sup> Norton (1862: 466).

<sup>17</sup> Hannay (1861: 470).

<sup>18</sup> Hannay (1861: 459–460).

<sup>19</sup> Donne (1860: 431).

closely connected with the character and habits of the reigning emperor".<sup>20</sup> Such an emphasis on the role of the great man in history connects Plutarch with the individualism of the Victorian period, and Henry David Thoreau commented on the similarity between Plutarch's approach to history and that of Thomas Carlyle:

All of Carlyle's works might well enough be embraced under the title of one of them, a good specimen brick, "On Heroes, Hero-worship, and the Heroic in History." Of this department, he is the Chief Professor in the World's University, and even leaves Plutarch behind.<sup>21</sup>

Simon Goldhill notes, however, that there is a telling silence about Plutarch in Carlyle's work: "it is perhaps both Carlyle's seductive modern approach to heroism and his all too easy sidestepping of Plutarch that help consign Plutarch to the shadows".<sup>22</sup>

Plutarch's strength, W.B. Donne argues, lies not in representing military history or politics but in humanising the great men of history:

From Thucydides we learn that Pericles was a consummate statesman and orator: from Plutarch ... we gain the knowledge that Pericles' head was "somewhat longish and out of proportion;" that the Athenians were once minded to ostracise him for his resemblance to the old tyrant Pisistratus; that his voice pierced every corner of the agora; that his manners were reserved, and his demeanour majestic.... In other writers, the elder Cato is little more than a stern and vigilant conservative setting his face against all change ... In Plutarch's portrait of the Tusculan aristocrat we see him with his keen grey eyes and red hair, in his coarse gown and unsandalled feet, carking and carping, to-day ploughing his own glebe, to-morrow shrill in voice and vehement in gesture, declaiming against bribery at home, or shrieking inexorably against the existence of poor moribund Carthage.<sup>23</sup>

For an age fascinated by historical fiction, Plutarch's popularity depended not on accuracy but on his vivid portrayal of character. Donne describes the *Lives* as analogous to the "living picture" of Scottish history in Sir Walter

<sup>20</sup> Brodribb (1873: 631).

<sup>21</sup> Thoreau (1847: 244).

<sup>22</sup> Goldhill (2002: 291).

<sup>23</sup> Donne (1860: 432).

Scott's Waverley novels; Thucydides and Livy provide the facts, but Plutarch illuminates the heroes' human foibles and virtues.<sup>24</sup> The comparison is an interesting one given Victorian readers' enthusiasm for Scott's historical fiction, its centrality to a nostalgic and romanticised understanding of Scotland and the formation of a British national identity. John Henry Raleigh sums up the appealing qualities of Scott's novels for the Victorian reader in terms which suggest some similarities with Plutarch: "their originality, their humor, ... the individuality of the characters, the melodrama, the sentiment, the good spirits, the 'sound' morality, ... the historical accounts, the thrilling battles".<sup>25</sup> The novels' popularity lay in the combination of romance and realism; despite his defects as an historian, Scott represented kinds of heroism that nineteenth-century observers found to be lacking in their own era. J.P. Mahaffy also compares Plutarch with Scott: "We feel him, as we feel Sir Walter Scott, not only the originator of an inestimably instructive form of historiography, but also essentially a gentleman – a man of honour and of kindness, the best type of the best men of his day".<sup>26</sup> Plutarch's essays were praised in similar terms. Brodribb writes, "When he deals with ordinary matters of life, he almost always shows good sense, and often acuteness. His moral essays constantly remind us of our friend Miss Edgeworth. A pleasant and healthy tone pervades them".<sup>27</sup> In his essay, "Books", Emerson observes:

Plutarch's "Morals" is less known, and seldom reprinted. Yet such a reader as I am writing to can as ill spare it as the "Lives." He will read in it the essays "On the Daemon of Socrates," "On Isis and Osiris," "On Progress in Virtue," "On Garrulity," "On Love," and thank anew the art of printing, and the cheerful domain of ancient thinking.<sup>28</sup>

Poets and novelists used episodes from Plutarch in their work. L.E.L. (Letitia Elizabeth Landon) wrote a poem on the "Death-Bed of Alexander the Great" and another on "Antony and Cleopatra. An Anecdote from Plutarch". Felicia Hemans also based a poem, "The Festal Hour", on Plutarch's *Life of Antony*. Ancient history was a frequent subject of study for girls, and stories based on Plutarch were reproduced in textbooks and histories. In George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, Mary Garth, who had expected to become a teacher, writes a

<sup>24</sup> Donne (1860: 432).

<sup>25</sup> Raleigh (1963: 9).

<sup>26</sup> Mahaffy (1890: 293).

<sup>27</sup> Brodribb (1873: 633).

<sup>28</sup> Emerson (1903: 166–167).

book for children, *Stories of Great Men, taken from Plutarch*. One of Eliot's own projects was partly inspired by Plutarch's *Lives*: she was planning to write a long poem on Timoleon, and consulted the *Life of Timoleon* as well as those of *Theseus*, *Pericles* and *Aristides*.<sup>29</sup> Charlotte Brontë wrote an essay based on an episode from Plutarch's *Life of Lysander* while at school in Belgium, on the theme of "Athens saved by poetry".<sup>30</sup> Following the defeat of Athens in the Peloponnesian War, Lysander and his allies consider burning down the city but are mollified by the performance of a chorus from Euripides' *Electra*. They decide that it would be cruel to destroy a city that produced such poets, so they tear down the walls, burn the ships and establish a Spartan garrison (*Lys.* 15). The power of Euripides' plays to save Athenian lives is similarly invoked in Robert Browning's *Balaustion's Adventure* (1871). The circumstances of the heroine's performance of Euripides' *Alcestis* are based on Plutarch's *Life of Nicias*. After the defeat of the Athenian forces in the Sicilian Expedition, the survivors who returned to Athens expressed their gratitude to Euripides because the Sicilians' love of Euripides had saved the Athenians who could recite his works. Browning represents Balaustion as one of the Kaunians who were at first prevented from entering the harbour at Syracuse to escape from pirates and later admitted because they could perform Euripides' poetry for the Sicilians (*Nic.* 29):

"Wait!"  
 Cried they (and wait we did, you may be sure).  
 "That song was veritable Aischulos,  
 Familiar to the mouth of man and boy,  
 Old glory: how about Euripides?  
 The newer and not yet so famous bard,  
 He that was born upon the battle-day  
 While that song and the salpinx sounded him  
 Into the world, first sounds, at Salamis –  
 Might you know any of his verses too?"<sup>31</sup>

George Eliot invokes an episode from the *Moralia* (*Virtues of women* 13) in *Daniel Deronda*: "the beautiful story Plutarch somewhere tells of the Delphic women: how when the Mænads, outworn with their torch-lit wanderings, lay down to sleep in the market-place, the matrons came and stood silently round

<sup>29</sup> Gordon (1995: 31).

<sup>30</sup> Fiske (2008: 76–97).

<sup>31</sup> Browning (1981: 1. 872), ed. Pettigrew and Collins.

them to keep guard over their slumbers; then, when they waked, ministered to them tenderly and saw them safely to their own borders".<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "The Dead Pan" alludes to the story that the oracles of the Olympian gods fell silent at the moment of Christ's crucifixion, which took place simultaneously with the death of Pan. The refrain "Pan is dead" refers to Plutarch's *On the obsolescence of oracles* 17. In Barrett Browning's poem, this refrain begins as a lament for the gods and later becomes joyful as the Greek gods gradually lose their powers and superstition is defeated by the spread of Christianity. Later in the Victorian period the transition from the pagan era to the Christian was treated with greater ambivalence. The title of Arthur Machen's Gothic novella *The Great God Pan* (1894) may allude to Barrett Browning's poem "A Musical Instrument", which begins "What was he doing, the great god Pan / Down in the reeds by the river?". Roger Luckhurst argues that representations of Pan by A.C. Swinburne, R.L. Stevenson and Machen belong to a *fin-de-siècle* counter-reaction to the idea that the death of Pan marked the end of the pagan world and the dominance of Christianity.<sup>33</sup>

Towards the end of the nineteenth century scholars increasingly shifted away from a focus on fifth-century Athens and Augustan Rome to later antiquity. Plutarch and his contemporaries, in their belatedness, seemed to have much in common with the decadence of the late nineteenth century. J.P. Mahaffy's *The Greek World under Roman Sway, from Polybius to Plutarch* (1890) presents Plutarch as the voice of sober compromise in the era of "the small and shabby gentility of Roman Greece".<sup>34</sup> Brodribb praises Plutarch's comparative approach to biography, finding it apt for a period of transition:

His Lives are thoroughly healthy reading – the idea of comparing eminent Greeks with eminent Romans was in itself a good one, and it was especially suited to a reflective self-conscious age which was witnessing the fusion of two such singularly contrasted worlds as the Roman and the Hellenic.<sup>35</sup>

R.C. Trench, Archbishop of Dublin, argues in a series of four lectures on Plutarch that the "utter decadence and decay" of Plutarch's beloved Greece motivated him to "show what manner and breed of men she once had borne, men that could be matched and paired with the best and greatest among that

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<sup>32</sup> Eliot (2008: 165), ed. Handley.

<sup>33</sup> Luckhurst (2005: 278–279).

<sup>34</sup> Mahaffy (1890: 300–301).

<sup>35</sup> Brodribb (1873: 631).

other people which, having passed her in the race, was now marching in the forefront of the world". The Romans, too, while powerful, needed narratives of the virtues of their ancestors "to remind them by what virtues, by what temperance, what frugality, what self-sacrifice those had made, and in a sense had deserved to make, the world their own".<sup>36</sup> The sense that the time for great heroes had passed continued to make Plutarch's *Lives* resonate at the end of the century but the praise of Plutarch took an increasingly melancholy tone.

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<sup>36</sup> Trench (1873: 32).

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## Plutarch and Cavafy

*David Ricks*

T.S. Eliot, in a celebrated assessment, judged that “Shakespeare acquired more essential history from Plutarch than most men could from the whole British Museum”.<sup>1</sup> The same could be said of the Greek poet C.P. Cavafy (1863–1933). Cavafy’s reputation, based in essence on a mere 154 short poems published in book form only posthumously in 1935, stands highest among Greek poets since Theocritus. And that reputation is a worldwide one: a bewildering number of English and other translations of his collected poems have appeared since 1951. But Cavafy has, over and above his universally acknowledged importance for the classical tradition,<sup>2</sup> three further distinctions which make him an essential part of any survey of the reception of Plutarch.

The first is that some of Cavafy’s most celebrated poems are indeed based on Plutarch – one consequence of which is that there are (Greek and other) readers who have turned to Plutarch’s writings as a direct consequence of having read the modern poet. The second is that Cavafy’s recourse to Plutarch’s work, though it be to the historical writings primarily, is at bottom moral and philosophical in spirit: his work thus belongs to both main streams in Plutarch’s reception. The third and most distinctive feature is that Cavafy’s mother tongue – in his distinctive idiolect, a bandwidth which can tune into many phases and registers of the language – is capable of subsuming Plutarchan allusion through verbatim quotation of the Greek original, thus allowing certain kinds of complex semantic and interpretative shifts.

Cavafy came to Plutarch with a scholar’s temperament and a critical bent but only a modest formal education. Born in Alexandria (“the Alexandrian” is enough to identify him for Greek readers) and raised partly in England, the collapse of his family’s fortunes precluded attendance at university, and his subsequent life in the employ of the Irrigation Service of Egypt under British rule<sup>3</sup> allowed time for wide reading rather than for sustained study. It is no coincidence that some of his clearest debts to Plutarch appear in poems which also have an inspiration in Shakespeare’s plays (on which see Miryana Dimitrova’s

<sup>1</sup> Eliot (1920: 47).

<sup>2</sup> Ricks (2010).

<sup>3</sup> For a chronology of his life, see Cavafy, ed. Hirst, trans. Sachperoglou (2007: xliv–xlviii).

contribution in this volume), or that a special preoccupation with the *Life of Antony* owes something to the modern poet's long residence in, and cultural affinity for the perennial idea of, Alexandria.<sup>4</sup>

Yet Cavafy's friend J.A. Sareyannis records that Plutarch had a special place in the poet's reading life and affections:<sup>5</sup>

He especially loved Plutarch; he knew all of him practically by heart, and in conversation he would often quote phrases from him, having the vanity once in a while to mention from which chapter they came.

The recollection rings true, and is seen as of central significance by scholars of the poet's work.<sup>6</sup> As we shall see, Cavafy both alludes very overtly to Plutarch and – with a characteristically revisionist impulse which reflects an admiration of Browning<sup>7</sup> sets out to rewrite Plutarch in subtle ways. Furthermore, Plutarch's cultural position as a Greek writer under Roman rule, writing for a Greek and Roman readership,<sup>8</sup> had a certain appeal to Cavafy as a Greek citizen living under British hegemony, even if allegorical readings of his poetry are perilous. Above all, perhaps, Cavafy shares Plutarch's preoccupation in his *Lives* with shifts in history as they elicit crises in individuals' fortunes. It is notable that each of the poems discussed below takes a scene from the end of the relevant protagonist's life, or from the painful beginning of the end.

Plutarch's presence, for Cavafy, is situated within a wider authorial stance in relation to antiquity, one which places no special value on the classical in itself, let alone on a defensive custodianship of it, but rather prizes the *longue durée* of Hellenism in woe and weal. This tendency is reflected in Cavafy's multifarious uses of the *Palatine Anthology*, by contrast with his indifference, say, to fifth-century Athens;<sup>9</sup> and it reflects a close concern for the mingled durability and precariousness of Greek culture over the centuries. Misappropriations of or misapprehensions about the Greek past are always open to Cavafian irony and critique – both of these elements forged in his earlier encounters with an authority whose texts permeate those also of Plutarch: Homer.<sup>10</sup> Along with his very different contemporary, Angelos Sikelianos (1884–1951), Cavafy is by

<sup>4</sup> Keeley (1996).

<sup>5</sup> Sareyannis (1983: 112–113).

<sup>6</sup> Mackridge (2007: xxv).

<sup>7</sup> See summarily Ricks (2003); the English poet's use of Plutarch is noted by Isobel Hurst in this volume.

<sup>8</sup> Jones (1971).

<sup>9</sup> See Ricks (2007).

<sup>10</sup> See Ricks (1989).

some way the most original of the modern Greek poets to have sought inspiration in antiquity; yet the equipment he brought to the task of engaging with the classical tradition could be described in the terms his great antagonist Gibbon applied to himself on his arrival at Oxford: “a stock of erudition that might have puzzled a Doctor and a degree of ignorance of which a school boy would have been ashamed”.<sup>11</sup> Or we may, not unkindly, speak of Cavafy’s small Greek and less Latin, while marvelling at what, like Shakespeare, he could do with Plutarch.

In what follows, given the constraints of space, I shall present in translations of my own the most salient examples of Cavafy’s engagement with Plutarchan material, all but one of them from his collected poems (often referred to as his “canonical” or “acknowledged” poems), leaving aside the rich seam of other relevant texts (the Greek poet, vigilant about his legacy, disseminated his work in magazines and in privately printed or handwritten sheets or fascicles, eschewing book publication).

### 1      *King Demetrius* (1906)

This poem represents the most visible presence of material from Plutarch in the whole of Cavafy’s work, simply in the sense that both Plutarch and a specific work are mentioned in the epigraph; and this makes it a good place to start. But it also forms a suitable point of departure because of its distinctive strategy, now so familiar to students of Cavafy’s irony, but at the time so unexpected. An early notice in a Greek magazine wrote of *King Demetrius*: “Here is the poem, and try not to laugh if you can ... And can you possibly tell me what is the point of these verses, coming as they do after the passage from Plutarch?” Cavafy’s earliest advocate, Gregorios Xenopoulos, confessed himself for his part nonplussed.<sup>12</sup> The revision of Plutarch boils down, as we shall see, not just to a boiling down of the historical incident related into a small compass, but to a single lexical change which questions the ancient authority in defence of a new *Weltanschauung*.

#### KING DEMETRIUS

Not like a king, but a player, he put on a dark cloak instead of that theatrical one and slipped away unnoticed.

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<sup>11</sup> Gibbon ed. Bonnard (1966: xxx).

<sup>12</sup> Daskalopoulos (2003: 469).

## PLUTARCH, LIFE OF DEMETRIUS

When the Macedonians abandoned him  
 and showed that Pyrrhus had their favour  
 King Demetrius (for great he was  
 of soul) did in no wise – so it was said –  
 comport himself like a king. He went  
 and took off his golden garments,  
 and tossed aside his shoes  
 of rich purple. In plain clothes  
 he quickly dressed and off he went.  
 Doing just what an actor does  
 who when the performance is over  
 changes costume and departs.

As we have noted, some early readers could not see the point of the poem; and it is one of several by Cavafy in which there is a deliberate imbalance between a long epigraph and the small body of the poem. In that sense it might be called a variation on a theme of Plutarch; and as we know from musical examples, variations can be playful, subverting the theme.

The poem's title (like that of the later *Demaratus* [1921])<sup>13</sup> suggests a theme for rhetorical treatment, perhaps by a student: "Justify the comportment on his fall of Demetrius i Poliorcetes". The choice of subject is not random, given that the parallel life in Plutarch is that of Antony (on which more later); and the choice of a moment of crisis is one which marks so many of Cavafy's poems, the Plutarch-based ones as much as any. Yet the disposition of the poem, with its slippery ironies, also makes it clear that Cavafy is not part of the venerable tradition (up to Adamantios Koraes: see Xenophontos in this volume) which reads Plutarch for moral improvement. Plutarch's *Life* ends abruptly with a turn to "the Roman drama" that follows: Cavafy deliberately presents us with a Demetrius at the critical moment of his life (288 BC), but five years before his eventual death and nine chapters (as measured by Plutarch) before his *Life* reaches its end. So what is going on?

Earlier in his *Life* (*Demetr.* 41.4) Plutarch had gone into some detail about Demetrius' luxurious ways, especially in terms of dress, exemplified most vividly by a prodigious cloak which was unfinished at the time of his fall from power. Meanwhile, his erstwhile supporters had come to see him as an inferior figure on the world stage when compared to Pyrrhus, as a figure with too much of the theatrical about him. By excerpting his chosen scene from the

<sup>13</sup> Cavafy, ed. Hirst, trans. Sachperoglou (2007: 130–133).

surrounding context of *Demetr.* 44–45, and the historical vicissitudes which Plutarch narrates in a large compass, the voice of Cavafy's poem counterposes itself to an (implicitly Plutarchan) voice. That voice is bracketed off by dashes (“— so it was said —”), in order to posit a more creditable motivation for Demetrius: a sense that all the world's a stage. The slightly desperate claim (again hedged by brackets) that Demetrius at bottom conformed to the model of Aristotle's magnanimous man (*megalopsychos*) is buttressed by a lexical shift: where Plutarch's Greek has the neutral *hypokrites*, Cavafy's poem, in its last sentence, opts for the nineteenth-century neologism *ēthopoiōs*<sup>14</sup> (lit. “creator of character”) which has become the standard modern Greek word for actor. That in itself makes the new poem more than a translation in verse of the Plutarch passage, as a Plutarch scholar has noted:<sup>15</sup>

Cavafy, while using almost the same wording as Plutarch, conveys the idea that Demetrius' detachment and acquiescence in defeat is admirable; the context in Plutarch suggests a quite different authorial stance.

But the divergence of the modern poem in fact goes a little further, with the calm divesting of other items of clothing which had been mentioned by Plutarch at an earlier point (*Demetr.* 41.4). The result is the creation by Cavafy of a new Demetrius, one whom we may – at least provisionally – see as a sober moral agent. Of course Cavafy knows this is no more than provisional, but the adjustment of the Plutarchan narrative is carried out in a gesture of protest against received opinion and ready moral judgement, and with a commitment to reading historiography with a sceptical eye. What we have in *King Demetrius* is in fact an implementation, using a historical case, of that view of the self which Cavafy had outlined in his unpublished *Philosophical Scrutiny* of his early oeuvre in 1903: “If a thought has been really true for a day, its becoming false the next day does not deprive it of its claim to verity”.<sup>16</sup> In other words, the staginess of Demetrius Poliorcetes is, as this poem sees it, not a wholly negative thing *on this occasion*, since it was, the poem posits, accompanied by a degree of self-consciousness. The reader may turn a merciful eye from Demetrius' subsequent backsliding and from his eventual death of inertia and gluttony (*Demetr.* 52.2–3); for Cavafy, however unsentimental his view of human affairs, is not a vindictive poet. His poem is sceptical rather than subversive. It does not enter the sphere of counterfactual history; it does not seek simply to overturn

<sup>14</sup> Koumanoudes (1980, s.v.).

<sup>15</sup> Mossman (2002: 106 n. 12).

<sup>16</sup> Cavafy, ed. Hirst, trans. Sachperoglou (2010: xxx).

Plutarch's authority. But, with its layers of interpretation, signalled (in the vein of Browning) by punctuation devices, it also proposes a distinctively modern hermeneutic of Plutarch. The same is true of the poems discussed next.

## 2      *Antony's End* (1907) and *The God Abandoning Antony* (1911)

The parallel *Life* to that of Demetrius, the *Life of Antony*, was something of an obsession for Cavafy – not surprisingly, given his preoccupation with Shakespeare<sup>17</sup> and the fact that much of the *Life's* action takes place in Alexandria. The genesis of *The God Abandoning Antony*<sup>18</sup> shows the modern poet moving away from Shakespeare and back to Plutarch, and then away once more. An unpublished poem, *Antony's End* (1907) left its author dissatisfied, perhaps feeling that its relation to the *Life of Antony* and to Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (4.15.52 ff.) was too visible to the naked eye. But a glance at the poem, which is not without its own force and astuteness in its use of Plutarch, can help us to see how Cavafy moves beyond a Plutarchan treatment in the poem that supplanted it.

### ANTONY'S END

But when he heard the women weeping  
 and mourning his wretched case,  
 the mistress with her oriental gesticulations,  
 and the slaves with their barbarous Greek,  
 the pride within his soul  
 bestirred itself, his Italian blood was revolted,  
 and everything that till then he'd blindly worshipped  
 seemed alien and indifferent  
 – his whole deranged Alexandrian life –  
 and he said, "Not to weep for him. This was unbecoming.  
 Rather, they should be singing his praises  
 for having wielded such a sway,  
 and having won so many a prize.  
 And if now he had fallen, his fall was no small one,  
 but that of a Roman by a Roman vanquished."

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<sup>17</sup> Cavafy, ed. Hirst, trans. Sachperoglou (2010: 27–30).

<sup>18</sup> Cavafy, ed. Hirst, trans. Sachperoglou (2007: 34–35).

The deathbed speech comes almost verbatim from Plutarch, cast in a verse form which owes something to Shakespeare's ringing adaptation of it: "a Roman by a Roman/Valiantly vanquished". The cooler form of *oratio obliqua* perhaps inclines the reader to look more sceptically on what is only reported speech. But when we look at the Plutarchan context (*Ant.* 77.2–4) we can see that the section of Cavafy's poem that introduces Antony's last words is quite different in emphasis:

For the task was not an easy one for women, and scarcely could Cleopatra, with clinging hands and strained face, pull up the rope, while those below called out encouragement to her and shared her agony. And when she had thus got him in and laid him down, she rent her garments over him, beat and tore her breasts with her hands, wiped off some of his blood upon her face, and called him master, husband, and imperator; indeed, she almost forgot her own ills in her pity for his. But Antony stopped her lamentations and asked for a drink of wine, either because he was thirsty, or in the hope of a speedier release. When he had drunk, he advised her to consult her own safety, if she could do it without disgrace, and among all the companions of Caesar to put most confidence in Proculeius, and not to lament him for his last reverses, but to count him happy for the good things that had been his, since he had become most illustrious of men, had won greatest power, and now had been not ignobly conquered, a Roman by a Roman.

Plutarch's account, despite the dryness of Antony's last words, is full of sympathy for Cleopatra and reflects no sense that Antony's conflicting feelings have not in his last moments been resolved. The animus in Cavafy's poem derives from Shakespeare, and it complicates the picture Plutarch gives.<sup>19</sup> For who can forget that Shakespeare appends to Antony's last speech these last despairing words: "My spirit is going; / I can no more"? In Cavafy's poem, the key phrase – marked as so often by dashes – "His whole deranged Alexandrian life", seems indeed to situate the poem in relation to the very first words of Shakespeare's play, expressing Roman disapproval of Antony's new life: "Nay, but this dotage of our general's / O'erflows the measure". These words, voiced in Alexandria, already set the stage for the scene-shifting between East and West, between Alexandria and Rome, which take on such importance in *Antony and Cleopatra*. If it were more starkly revisionist still, *Antony's End* might have been

19 Pelling (1988: 307–308).

called *Fulvia's Revenge*. For it shows an Antony whose boasts of his *Romanitas* are undermined by his aspiration to make the perfect deathbed speech with a "lapidary quality".<sup>20</sup> It is his revulsion from Cleopatra and all Greeks that is the truly histrionic element in the poem, not the laments of the Greek-speaking womenfolk which so perturb him. Cavafy has, then, once again taken the opportunity to question the Plutarchan account.

For whatever reason, Cavafy felt on reflection dissatisfied with *Antony's end*, and he produced a new poem, in which the historical (and specifically the Plutarchan) Antony in his death throes is replaced by an Everyman, now addressed in the second person:

#### THE GOD ABANDONING ANTONY

When suddenly at midnight there is heard  
 an unseen party of revellers passing by  
 with exquisite music, with raised voices –  
 your fortunes that give way now, your deeds  
 that failed, your plans in life  
 that all turned out illusory: do not vainly mourn them.  
 As one long ready, as one bold of heart,  
 bid farewell to the Alexandria that quits you.  
 Above all, do not deceive yourself, say not that it was all  
 a dream, that your ears deceived you;  
 stoop not to vain hopes of that kind.  
 As one long ready, as one bold of heart,  
 as befits you who were found worthy of such a city,  
 go with firm stride to the window,  
 and listen with emotion, but not  
 with a coward's entreaties and reproaches,  
 for one last moment of enjoyment, to the sounds,  
 the exquisite instruments of the mystical revellers,  
 and bid farewell to her, the Alexandria now slipping from you.

The Plutarchan anchor which Cavafy's poem quietly slips is the poem's first line, in the ancient Greek original, quoting *Ant.* 75.3:

During this night, it is said, about the middle of it, while the city was quiet and depressed through fear and expectation of what was coming, suddenly certain harmonious sounds from all sorts of instruments were

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<sup>20</sup> Pelling (1988: 307).

heard, and the shouting of a throng, accompanied by cries of Bacchic revelry and satyric leapings, as if a troop of revellers, making a great tumult, were going forth from the city; and their course seemed to lie about through the middle of the city toward the outer gate which faced the enemy, at which point the tumult became loudest and then dashed out. Those who sought the meaning of the sign were of the opinion that the god to whom Antony always most likened and attached himself was now deserting him.

It is the last phrase of this passage, of course, that furnishes the opening line of Cavafy's poem – a characteristic inversion – and the line appears in the original Greek. It appears there, both lexically simple for the modern Greek reader and unmoored, marked by syntactical incompleteness: *Apoleipein o theos Antōnion*. This note of mystery is accentuated by the rest of the poem, as we gradually move further from the figure of Antony – even the more interior Antony Shakespeare fleshed out from the Plutarchan account – to someone and something else. And the complications go further: for even the start of the poem, despite its clear debt to Plutarch's Greek, which appears in paraphrase, develops a different emphasis: in Plutarch's telling the revellers are louder and more boisterous.

Cavafy progressively detaches a poem which begins so close to Plutarch's text and to his Antony's affinity for Dionysus specifically and moves us to a different allegiance: that of the poem's addressee (which is not Antony)<sup>21</sup> to Alexandria. That city, a grammatical feminine evocative of a woman's name, has quietly supplanted Cleopatra in the whole story (as Cleopatra is rejected in *Caesarion*, discussed below). Just as the god abandons Antony (and the truncated and capitalised quotation as it appears in Cavafy would allow for this to be God himself), so too Cavafy's poem eventually relinquishes history and Plutarch in favour of a meditation on death itself and on the notion of Alexandria as the quintessence of existence.<sup>22</sup>

### 3      *Caesarion* (1918)

The two preceding examples might be taken to imply that Cavafy, despite his recourse to the ancient author's very words, uses Plutarch's text as no more than a pretext: a springboard to produce something more philosophical than

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<sup>21</sup> Pace Pelling (1988: 303–304).

<sup>22</sup> Ricks (2004).

history: *philosophōteron*, in Aristotle's term (*Poetics* 1451b). Discussion of the remaining examples will show that this is by no means the case; and Cavafy took pride in seeing himself, in contrast to most poets, as specifically a *poiētēs historikos* (a historical poet or poet-historian).<sup>23</sup> Cavafy's most influential and widely imitated exploration of the individual's reader's relation to history is *Caesarion*:<sup>24</sup>

Partly to check a date,  
 partly to pass the time,  
 last night, late, I took down a collection  
 of Ptolemaic inscriptions for my reading.  
 The boundless praise and flattery  
 are much alike for all the monarchs. All are illustrious,  
 glorious, mighty, beneficent;  
 each of their enterprises most wise.  
 As for the women of that line, they too,  
 every Berenice and Cleopatra, worthy of our awe.

On managing to check the date,  
 I'd have set the book aside, had a reference, brief  
 and insignificant enough, to King Caesarion,  
 not instantly attracted my attention.

Ha! and there you were with your indefinable  
 charm. In history but a few  
 lines are devoted to you,  
 and so I shaped you the more freely in my mind.  
 I shaped you handsome and sensitive.  
 My art endows your face  
 with a dreamy, appealing beauty.  
 And so completely did I imagine you  
 that late last night, as my lamp  
 was starting to go out – I meant it to –  
 I fancied you had come into my room;  
 It seemed to me that you were there before me; just as you were  
 in conquered Alexandria;  
 wan and weary, ideal in your sorrow,

<sup>23</sup> Mackridge (2007: xxv).

<sup>24</sup> Cavafy, ed. Hirst, trans. Sachperoglou (2007: 84–87).

still hoping they would show some tenderness,  
the base, who were a-whispering of “too many Caesars”.

This poem too is anchored firmly in Plutarch’s *Life of Antony*, though this time by a single word: its compendious final word of quotation, *polykaisariē*. Once again, the verbatim quotation is quite comprehensible to the modern reader as a lexical item, even if the allusion behind it to *Iliad* 2.204 might go unnoticed. In that passage, Odysseus goes among the Achaeans, stirring up the rulers for the assembly, but also quieting the ruled with the admonition, in a Homeric *hapax*, that “having multiple lords” (*polykoiraniē*) is a dangerous thing. As related by Plutarch, the word becomes a donnish joke in the mouth of Octavian’s henchman, the philosopher Areius (*Ant.* 81.2–82.1):

But Caesarion, who was said to be Cleopatra’s son by Julius Caesar, was sent by his mother, with much treasure, into India, by way of Ethiopia. There Rhodon, another tutor like Theodorus, persuaded him to go back, on the ground that Caesar invited him to take the kingdom. But while Caesar was deliberating on the matter, we are told that Areius said: –  
“Not a good thing were a Caesar too many.”

As for Caesarion, then, he was afterwards put to death by Caesar.

Such, too, is the hard-boiled ending of Cavafy’s poem, and the black humour is couched in a neatly turned iambic decapentasyllable, the standard metre of vernacular Greek epic (as of modern Greek poetry more generally). Yet what has led up it diverges from the picture given in Plutarch: with its intense eroticising of the figure of Caesarion (of whose appearance and demeanour we know, and Plutarch tells, nothing), Cavafy’s poem slips the traces of Plutarch’s telling of history and moves, with acknowledged wilfulness, into the realm of the imagination. “Plutarch could have excited more emotion had he wished”:<sup>25</sup> Cavafy steps into the breach. His *Caesarion* reflects two contemporary texts, each with a strong homoerotic charge: Oscar Wilde’s *The Portrait of Mr W.H.* (1889)<sup>26</sup> and Lionel Johnson’s *By the Statue of King Charles at Charing Cross* (1892), a hagiography of Charles I “the Martyr”.<sup>27</sup> Yet the Plutarch dimension, easy to avert one’s pitying eyes from, on some readings of Cavafy’s poem, is ineradicably there – a sign that history does involve base characters, and grey ones, such as Areius, unnamed here, and the tutor Theodorus, who betrayed

<sup>25</sup> Pelling (1988: 312).

<sup>26</sup> See Ekdawi (1993: 25).

<sup>27</sup> Johnson, ed. Fletcher (1953: 11–13).

Caesarion's half-brother in the same fashion. That the poem was first published in 1918,<sup>28</sup> in the year the Bolsheviks made away with a "little Caesar", the Tsarevich Alexei Nikolaevich, only lends it further poignancy. Cavafy's sense, furthermore, that Plutarch had found the *mot juste* with which he could end his own poem is clear. Once again, it is evident that for the modern Greek poet Plutarch is no mere source of information or fund of tales but an author whose *ipsissima verba* still have weight and depth.

#### 4      *In Sparta* (1928) and *Come, o King of the Lacedaemonians* (1929)

If the foregoing examples suggest that the *exempla* taken by Cavafy from Plutarch were exclusively male, as (no denying it) all of Plutarch's *Lives* are lives of men, then they mislead. In two poems at the end of his career, and following the Asia Minor Disaster of 1922, when, as Cavafy observed with sorrow from a distance, well over a million Greeks left ancestral lands in Asia Minor to return to a small and emotionally shrunken Greek state, he went back to Plutarch once more. A number of Cavafy's canonical poems from this period explore, in a powerfully understated way, moments of history when power slipped from the Greeks, or from some categories of Greeks, to others. Here the figure of the Spartan queen Cratesicleia in the *Life of Cleomenes* comes to prominence in two more poems steeped in Plutarch. First, *In Sparta*:<sup>29</sup>

He just had no idea, King Cleomenes, he just couldn't pluck up the  
courage,

he just didn't know how he could find the words to tell  
his mother: that it was Ptolemy's stipulation  
that, as security for their agreement, she was to be sent  
to Egypt and there be under guard:

a most degrading, a most unbecoming thing.

And he'd be on the point of speaking; and would then vacillate.

And he'd be about to have a word; and would then stop in his tracks.

But that finest of women saw through him  
(she had already heard some rumours),  
and she encouraged him to come out with it.

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28 Daskalopoulos (2003: 68).

29 Cavafy, ed. Hirst, trans. Sachperoglou (2007: 174–177).

And she laughed; and she said of course she'd go.  
 Indeed she was glad she could be  
 even at her age of some use to Sparta.

As for the degradation – well, she couldn't care less.  
 The spirit of Sparta was certainly not a thing  
 some upstart Lagid would ever have any sense of;  
 for which reason his request could in no wise  
 be a real degradation for a Noble  
 Queen such as she; a King of Sparta's mother.

On a hasty reading, Cavafy's poem does little more than condense and re-point in verse lineation the matter which he receives from Plutarch (*Cleom. 22.3–4*):

Now, Ptolemy [III Euergetes] the king of Egypt promised him aid and assistance, but demanded his mother and his children as hostages. For a long time, therefore, he was ashamed to tell his mother, and though he often went to her and was at the very point of letting her know, he held his peace, so that she on her part became suspicious and enquired of his friends whether there was not something which he wished to impart to her but hesitated to do so. Finally, when Cleomenes plucked up courage to speak of the matter, his mother burst into a hearty laugh and said: "Was this the thing which thou wast often of a mind to tell me but lost thy courage? Make haste, put me on board a vessel, and send this frail body wheresoever thou thinkest it will be of most use to Sparta, before old age destroys it sitting idly here".

As on previous occasions, however, the different emphasis Cavafy's poem provides is evident. The Plutarch passage revolves around the Spartan fortitude and plain speaking which the mother possesses as her son does not; but Cavafy adds the extra element of pride which shows a Spartan lady who rejects the Macedonian dynasty as upstarts, as not quite the thing. Brave words, yet empty ones, given the collapse of the agreement with Ptolemy III Euergetes on the coming to power of his successor Ptolemy IV Philopator and the subsequent murder of Cratesicleia. Cavafy is not so harsh as to satirise so courageous a statement as the one she makes here, but – in the spirit of Plutarch – he contrasts outcomes with rhetoric. The word Cratesicleia uses of Spartan spirit (*phronēma*) is exactly that spirit or composure which Plutarch notes deserted the queen when she learned with horror and lamentation of Cleomenes' fall

(*Cleom.* 38.1). Undoubted courage in the face of vulnerability could not be sustained as acquiescence in final defeat and destruction. Her vicissitudes are observed by Cavafy without illusions.

*Come, o King of the Lacedaemonians*<sup>30</sup> draws more fully on the same *Life* just one step further on in the text. And Plutarch's exact words so permeate this poem by Cavafy that it throws down a gauntlet to those of his contemporaries, even sympathetic ones, who saw some of his later poems, especially, as being dangerously close to centoed from his wide reading:

Cratesicleia could not bear  
 people to see her weeping and lamenting;  
 so she stepped forth with due dignity and in silence.  
 Nothing betrayed in her untroubled mien  
 her anguish and her torment.  
 But nonetheless, there was a moment when she succumbed;  
 and before she set off in that ghastly ship for Alexandria,  
 she took her son off to the temple of Poseidon,  
 and once they were alone took him in her embrace  
 and started to kiss him, one "in grievous pain", says  
 Plutarch, "and shaken to the core".  
 But her strong character came through  
 and coming to herself that wonderful woman  
 said to Cleomenes: "Come, o King  
 of the Lacedaemonians, when we go  
 forth let no one see us weeping  
 or doing anything unworthy  
 of Sparta. For this lies in our power, and this alone;  
 but as for the issues of fortune, we shall have what the Deity may grant."

And into the ship she went, on her way to that "may grant".

The passage drawn on is this (*Cleom.* 22.5–6):

Accordingly, when all things were ready, they came to Taenarus by land, while the army escorted them under arms. And as Cratesicleia was about to embark, she drew Cleomenes aside by himself into the temple of Poseidon, and after embracing and kissing him in his anguish and deep trouble, said: "Come, O king of the Lacedaemonians, when we go forth let

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<sup>30</sup> Cavafy, ed. Hirst, trans. Sachperoglou (2007: 194–197).

no one see us weeping or doing anything unworthy of Sparta. For this lies in our power, and this alone; but as for the issues of fortune, we shall have what the Deity may grant." After saying this, she composed her countenance and proceeded to the ship with her little grandson, and bade the captain put to sea with all speed.

In Cavafy's reworking of this passage, several differences of framing are significant. The first, a characteristically Cavafian move, is the ending of the poem on the point of action, with the action itself omitted. A second is the ambling up to a long quotation from Plutarch through an initial fragmented quotation: this serves to conflate Plutarch's words and the words of Cratesicleia as reported by Plutarch. A third, perhaps the most important, has two linked aspects. Of these, one is familiar from our other poems, and especially from *Caesarion*: a sense that Plutarch's words cannot be improved upon, and that his idiom, the *koinē*, remains a glory of the Greeks.<sup>31</sup> It is that spirit that the poet recurs to the single word *didoi* ("may grant") in the last line. But in this poem the point sits with a tribute to Plutarch himself, named (as he is only in the epigraph to *King Demetrius*) and thereby endorsed as a source of ancestral wisdom.

One of the sharpest minds ever to turn itself to the long history of Cavafy's part of the world, the Baghdad-born Elie Kedourie, turned to the modern Greek poet as he did also to Plutarch in search of understanding of human conduct.<sup>32</sup> In some such spirit, Cavafy before him turned to Plutarch, an enduring voice in the language he elected to write in; a voice, too, of that people to whose historical experience he was always attentive and indeed loyal. When Eliot spoke of Plutarch as making available to Shakespeare "essential history", he meant more than dates and facts: he meant the historical sense. And part of what appealed to Cavafy in Plutarch can be found in what is distilled towards the end of Plutarch's essay on how a young man is to read poetry (*De aud. poet.* 35D):<sup>33</sup>

Plainly, then, two great advantages accrue to those who accustom themselves carefully to peruse works of poetry: the first is conducive to moderation, that we do not odiously and foolishly reproach anybody with his fortune (*tychē*); while the second is conducive to magnanimity (*megalophrōsynē*), that when we ourselves have met with chances and changes we be not humiliated or even disturbed ...

<sup>31</sup> See Cavafy, ed. Hirst, trans. Sachperoglou (2007: 204–205).

<sup>32</sup> Kedourie (1971: 78; 1976: v).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Hunter and Russell (2011: 199).

*In Sparta* and *Come, o King of the Lacedaemonians*, like *Caesarion* before them, are not poems disdainful of the historical protagonists they include – far from it. And *King Demetrius* and *The God Abandoning Antony* counsel that same *megalophrosynē* in the face of adversity as Plutarch holds up for our commendation, even if they do so more provisionally and in different accents. Like Plutarch, and inspired by him, the modern Greek poet “breathes into these ancient lives a new energy”<sup>34</sup> and for that reason Cavafy has indeed been called “a modern Plutarch”.<sup>35</sup> The designation might have pleased him.

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<sup>34</sup> Lamberton (2001: 195).

<sup>35</sup> Leontis (2001).

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# Plutarch in American Literature: Emerson and Other Authors

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## 1 Introduction

Classical names are sprinkled liberally across the US, indicative of a desire to allude and pay homage to ancient cultures. Before the civil war of 1861–1865, there were at least 13 towns called Athens in different parts of the country;<sup>1</sup> and Boston had the epithet “Athens of America”.<sup>2</sup> Visitors to New York state even today might be surprised to encounter not just Athens but Attica, Aurelius, Camillus, Cicero, Cincinnatus, Corinth, Diana, Fabius, Galen, Hannibal, Homer, Italy, Ithaca, Macedon, Manlius, Marcellus, Moira, Ovid, Pompey, Romulus, Scio, Scipio, Seneca and Seneca Falls, Solon, Sparta, Ulysses, Virgil and of course Greece.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, in 1790, three commissioners met in New York City to give names to 25 new townships being created in the state. They chose twenty names from classical antiquity, 12 of which they lifted directly from Plutarch’s *Lives*. The fact that one was called “Dryden” is evidence that his was the translation they drew on as their source, according to Meyer Reinhold, who states conclusively that, “The most popular work of ancient literature (always excepting the Bible) in America for about 250 years was Plutarch’s *Lives*".<sup>4</sup>

Plutarch’s oeuvre wielded a particular influence on American culture during this early period. Cotton Mather (1662/3–1727/8) – a polymathic Puritan preacher, possessing a vast expanse of humanistic learning but best remembered for his support of the Salem witch trials – praised “the incomparable Plutarch”, and quoted him lavishly in his seven-volume history of seventeenth-century New England Puritanism, entitled *Magnalia Christi Americana*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Winterer (2002: 52).

<sup>2</sup> Winterer (2002: 51).

<sup>3</sup> 2010 census of population and housing, <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/cph-2-34.pdf> (last accessed 4 March 2019). See also Reinhold (1984: 257).

<sup>4</sup> Reinhold (1984: 250). See Winterer (2002: 1) and Shalev (2009: 1–7) for more general observations on the classical influence on Revolutionary America.

<sup>5</sup> Full title, *Magnalia Christi Americana: Or, The Ecclesiastical History of New-England; From Its First Planting, in the Year 1620, Unto the Year of Our Lord 1698. In Seven Books*. Mather

Mather's lengthy tome included about 40 biographical sketches of political and religious leaders which drew on the *Lives* both explicitly and implicitly, through their structure and style.<sup>6</sup> Benjamin Franklin,<sup>7</sup> John Adams, his son John Quincy Adams,<sup>8</sup> and Thomas Jefferson<sup>9</sup> were all ardent classicists. During the American eighteenth century, political figures, influenced by British neoclassicism,<sup>10</sup> placed a significant emphasis on notions of civic duty and public action, and it is perhaps unsurprising that Plutarch's *Lives* assumed an educational role, their anecdotes of virtue and vice pervading rhetorical discourse and providing flourishes for political speeches.<sup>11</sup> As Reinhold notes, "It is characteristic of eighteen-century Americans that in their eclectic reading in the classics they were interested principally in the prose authors – the moralists and the historians – for their practical value in promoting moral and political wisdom".<sup>12</sup>

In the period running up to the American war of independence (1775–1783) and in the jostling for power that occurred just after it, classical learning continued to attract respect. Harvard required prospective students to read Latin and Greek from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, and other colleges followed its lead.<sup>13</sup> But gradually over the course of the nineteenth century the role of classics in America, and of Plutarch with it, faded and shifted from being a necessary tag or symbol, part of the political discursive life,<sup>14</sup> to a niche interest, attracting the attention primarily of writers and intellectuals.<sup>15</sup> Classics was criticised as being insufficiently practical for a modern, commercial nation, and came to be viewed as elitist.<sup>16</sup> Into this unlikely landscape emerged

recommends that "any Person of good Sense" peruse a list of ancient authors and remarks, "unto all the rest, let him not fail of adding the incomparable Plutarch, whose books they say, Theodore Gaza preferred before any in the world, next unto the inspired oracles of the Bible", Mather (1702; 1853, vol. 1: 29). See also Reinhold (2002: 51).

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of stylistic allusions to Plutarch and parallelism in Mather's work, see Van Cromphout (1975) *passim*.

<sup>7</sup> Reinhold (1984: 252).

<sup>8</sup> Reinhold (1984: 147, 259). See also Winterer (2007: 19–21).

<sup>9</sup> Reinhold (1984: 24).

<sup>10</sup> Reinhold (1984: 39).

<sup>11</sup> "Plutarch's *Lives* ... was immensely popular in the colonies". Shalev (2009: 99). See also Reinhold (1984) ch. V *passim*.

<sup>12</sup> Reinhold (1984: 25).

<sup>13</sup> Reinhold (1984: 27).

<sup>14</sup> Reinhold (1984: 25).

<sup>15</sup> A trajectory charted in detail by Winterer (2002) and Reinhold (1984).

<sup>16</sup> See Reinhold (1984) ch. vi *passim* and 281.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, a brilliant speaker and writer, with a particular love for Plutarch's *Lives* and *Moralia*.<sup>17</sup>

## 2 Transcendental Plutarch

The Essay on "Plutarch" has a peculiar value from the fact that Emerson owes more to him than to any other author except Plato, who is one of the only two writers quoted oftener than Plutarch. *Mutato nomine*, the portrait which Emerson draws of the Greek moralist might stand for his own.<sup>18</sup>

Oliver Wendell Holmes

Ralph Waldo Emerson was a poet, essayist and lecturer, born in Boston in 1803. He studied at Harvard, where he attended the classes of Edward Everett, one of the most famous classicists in America at the time, who had completed a doctorate at Göttingen and had been tasked with transforming the study of Greek and Latin at Harvard.<sup>19</sup> Because Emerson's father had been a minister, there were family expectations that he or one of his four brothers would pursue a career in the church,<sup>20</sup> but after an initial period, during which he preached as a Unitarian pastor (more than 200 of his sermons are still extant),<sup>21</sup> he embarked on a career path novel for the time but which built upon his experience as a preacher – of living by his lectures and writing.

His trajectory as a lecturer coincided with a new enthusiasm for adult education, and brought him considerable success across the social spectrum (he also later travelled to Britain where his lectures were glowingly received).<sup>22</sup> In *Remembrances of Emerson* by John Albee, the narrator recalls meeting a farmer from Concord, a town in Massachusetts. The farmer "told me proudly that he had heard every one of Emerson's lectures delivered in that town; and after a moment's hesitation he added, 'And I understood 'em too'".<sup>23</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Reinhold (1984) 259. See also Berry (1961: 41): "[T]he striking thing about this devotion to Plutarch", writes Berry, "is that the indications of it are scattered through the writing of many years, from Emerson's youth until not long before his death, and the same is true of the letters".

<sup>18</sup> Holmes, Oliver Wendell (1885; 2004: 299). Also quoted by Edward Emerson in Emerson (1876; 1883; 1903) vol. x, 569 note\* on "Plutarch".

<sup>19</sup> Reinhold (1984: 205).

<sup>20</sup> Packer (1995; 2007: 36).

<sup>21</sup> Packer (1995; 2007: 37).

<sup>22</sup> Packer (1995; 2007: 178–179).

<sup>23</sup> Albee (1901: 14).

In 1836, Emerson and some likeminded friends formed a club called "The Symposium" and then "Hedge's Club" after one of its members. It later became known as the Transcendental Club<sup>24</sup> and it developed into a much broader movement. Transcendentalists were (to paraphrase Emerson) idealists who believed in the power of thought and will, inspiration, miracle and individual culture.<sup>25</sup> Emerson became one of its chief spokespeople and, after the resignation of his friend, Margaret Fuller, edited the Transcendental journal *The Dial*.<sup>26</sup> The only rule at that early club, according to historian Barbara Packer, was that "no one whose presence might prevent discussion of any particular subject could be invited to meetings".<sup>27</sup> The group felt "they were the conduits for a stream of revolutionary ideas from Europe".<sup>28</sup>

As these American writers strove to define and create the literature of the young nation, their relationship with the classics played a significant part, taking the form of both admiration and rejection. The reception of classical texts by the Transcendentalists, dedicated to forging a new movement in American culture, was hardly uncritical. In one of his most famous essays, *Self-Reliance*, Emerson censures quotation for its own sake, and disparages modes of speaking that rely excessively on the past, claiming, "Man is timid and apologetic; he is no longer upright; he dares not say 'I think,' 'I am,' but quotes some saint or sage".<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, over the course of his writing career Emerson drew extensively upon Plutarchan texts, plundering them for inspiration, reworking their ideas and motifs,<sup>30</sup> and referring prolifically to both the *Moralia* and the *Lives*.<sup>31</sup> This debt to Plutarch is sustained across his corpus, allusions as ubiquitous in his notebooks and lectures as his friend and early biographer, the doctor, poet and essayist Oliver Holmes, described above. In *Books*, a late essay<sup>32</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Packer (1995; 2007: 47).

<sup>25</sup> See Emerson (1903–1904) vol. I, "The Transcendentalist", 330.

<sup>26</sup> Packer (1995; 2007: 119).

<sup>27</sup> Packer (1995; 2007: 47).

<sup>28</sup> Packer (1995; 2007: 48).

<sup>29</sup> Complete works of Emerson vol. II, 67 (*Self-Reliance*). See too, "It is for want of self-culture that the superstition of Travelling, whose idols are Italy, England, Egypt, retains its fascination for all educated Americans. They who made England, Italy, or Greece venerable in the imagination, did so by sticking fast where they were, like an axis of the earth". Complete works of Emerson vol. II, 80–81. Of course, Emerson did travel to Europe as a young man and again when more established.

<sup>30</sup> "He dresses his novel, often revolutionary ideas with an old lustre or illustration; not because it is old but because, although it is old, it is still apt and striking". Berry (1961: 233), in reference to a reworking of Simonides which Emerson obtains from Montaigne who took it from Plutarch.

<sup>31</sup> Emerson (1876; 1883; 1903) vol. VII, 200.

<sup>32</sup> "[On]e of the last essays which he himself published", Berry (1961: 45).

outlining what his listeners should read over the course of the limited span of a lifetime, he proposes Plutarch, along with Homer, Herodotus, Aeschylus and Plato as one of the “old Greek books” that are indispensable.<sup>33</sup> “Plutarch cannot be spared from the smallest library”, he observes, “first because he is so readable, which is much; then that he is medicinal and invigorating”.<sup>34</sup> After recommending the *Lives* for providing the best and most invigorating exempla that history can offer, he proceeds to mention the *Moralia*, singling out for praise *On the sign of Socrates*, *On Isis and Osiris*, *On progress in virtue*, *On talkativeness* and the *Dialogue on love*. In the privileged environment of the lecture hall, or its textual rendering, the essay, Emerson brings the *Moralia* specifically to the reader’s – and to *his* reader’s – attention:

But Plutarch’s Morals is less known, and seldom reprinted. Yet such a reader as I am writing to can as ill spare it as the Lives.... Plutarch charms by the facility of his associations; so that it signifies little where you open his book, you find yourself at the Olympian tables. His memory is like the Isthmian Games, where all that was excellent in Greece was assembled; and you are stimulated and recruited by lyric verses, by philosophic sentiments, by the forms and behavior of heroes, by the worship of the gods, and by the passing of fillets, parsley and laurel wreaths, chariots, armor, sacred cups and utensils of sacrifice.<sup>35</sup>

Emerson studied Greek and was capable of understanding Greek phrases, but after graduating from Harvard, most of his engagement with Plutarch was in the form of translations as was typical of the time<sup>36</sup> – the *Lives* in Langhorne and Dryden’s rendering and the *Moralia* translated by “Several Hands”.<sup>37</sup> The borrowing records from the Boston Library Society suggest that he read the third volume of the Several Hands translation of the *Moralia* in 1825, the second, third and fourth volumes in 1828, and the fourth and fifth in 1829.<sup>38</sup> In 1826 he took out Amyot’s *Oeuvres de Plutarque* from Harvard College Library.<sup>39</sup>

33 Emerson (1903–1904) vol. VII, 197.

34 Emerson (1903–1904) vol. VII, 199.

35 Emerson (1903–1904) vol. VII, 200.

36 Berry (1961: 35–36); Reinhold (1984: 260).

37 Berry (1961: 36–37). “Emerson’s attitude towards reading the original Latin and Greek and reading translations is well known; he gained sufficient Greek to copy phrases or verses into his journals and, in his old age, to compare Goodwin’s translation with the original, but after he left college, almost all of his reading of the classics or of French or German writers was done in translation”.

38 Berry (1961: 38).

39 Berry (1961: 38).

Between 1830 and the 1870s, Emerson repeatedly cites the *Lives* and in even greater number the *Moralia* in his journals and letters.<sup>40</sup> The role of translations means that his readings are layered and mediated, a response to the English rendering as well as to Plutarch's texts themselves.

### 3 A Prattler of History

Emerson's assessment of Plutarch is most saliently showcased in his essay titled "Plutarch". It originated as the introduction to William Goodwin's revised translation of the "Morals", which appeared in 1871.<sup>41</sup> Emerson was not entirely happy with Goodwin's updated translation, which was more accurate than the version "by Several Hands" of 1684–1694 but lacked its flair.<sup>42</sup> In his essay, he occasionally quotes accidentally from the original version,<sup>43</sup> and he asked Goodwin to reinsert some of the earlier phrases, which, according to Emerson's son, Goodwin duly did.<sup>44</sup>

The image we find of Plutarch may come as a surprise to twenty-first century scholars who have sought to rehabilitate the author. Emerson notes that Plutarch possesses "an immense popularity in modern nations",<sup>45</sup> and wryly observes that while he cannot rival Thucydides: "I suppose he has a hundred readers where Thucydides finds one, and Thucydides must often thank Plutarch for that one".<sup>46</sup> He paints a lively picture of Plutarch's reception, listing his many subsequent admirers – Montaigne, Rabelais, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau and others – and lauds the translations of Amyot and Thomas North and Philemon Holland.<sup>47</sup> Although, in his estimation, Plutarch is neither "a

<sup>40</sup> Berry (1961: 41–43), compiles an extensive list.

<sup>41</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. x, 294 n. 1.

<sup>42</sup> See Babbitt (1927: xxix).

<sup>43</sup> Berry (1961: 47).

<sup>44</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. x, "Plutarch", 321–322: "There are, no doubt, many vulgar phrases, and many blunders of the printer; but it is the speech of business and conversation, and in every tone, from lowest to highest. We owe to these translators many sharp perceptions of the wit and humor of their author, sometimes even to the adding of the point. I notice one, which, although the translator has justified his rendering in a note, the severer criticism of the Editor has not retained. 'Were there not a sun, we might, for all the other stars, pass our days in the Reverend Dark, as Heraclitus calls it.' I find a humor in the phrase which might well excuse its doubtful accuracy". For Goodwin's preservation of the old phraseology at Emerson's request, see Emerson vol. x, 569–570, note\* on "Plutarch".

<sup>45</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. x, "Plutarch", 294.

<sup>46</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. x, "Plutarch", 302.

<sup>47</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. x, "Plutarch", 295–296.

profound mind" nor "a master in any science" nor a naturalist nor a leader of the mind of a generation, he had the imaginative qualities of a poet, sound morals and a "universal sympathy with genius which makes all its victories his own".<sup>48</sup>

The essay comprises a series of eulogistic observations, homing in sympathetically on evidence of Plutarch's "mystic tendencies"<sup>49</sup> and describing his philosophical approach nevertheless as oriented towards the practical ("he is more interested in the results than in the method").<sup>50</sup> In all, what seems to draw Emerson most to Plutarch is his "rapid and crowded style".<sup>51</sup> In Emerson's terms, "he prattles history".<sup>52</sup>

#### 4 Emerson's Biographies: *Representative Men*

Emerson influenced others, and clearly believed in Plutarch's pedagogical and exemplary value. According to Oliver Wendell Holmes, he distributed Plutarch's *Lives* to students during his brief stint as a teacher after graduating from Harvard. He would give the boys a piece of reading to bring home with them "from some book like Plutarch's Lives", and would examine them the next day to see what they had retained.<sup>53</sup> His son Edward, who annotated *The complete works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, recalled:

When I was fourteen years old, he put *Plutarch's Lives* into my hand and bade me read two pages every week-day and ten every holiday. It seemed at first an irksome task, but my mother asked me to read them aloud to her, and this made it easier. Lycurgus's training of the Spartan boys, Archimedes's amazing military engineering in the defence of Syracuse, Hannibal's passage of the Alps, Scipio's magnanimity and Caesar's courage and genius won their own way, as my father knew they would with a boy, and, what is by no means common with authors, the personality of the writer also, as, for instance, where he drops the narrative to hotly censure the meanness of Cato the Elder in selling his slaves when they were past service. The style of Plutarch could command itself even to a boy.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. x, "Plutarch", 297–298.

<sup>49</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. x, "Plutarch", 305.

<sup>50</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. x, "Plutarch", 307–308.

<sup>51</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. x, "Plutarch", 301.

<sup>52</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. x, "Plutarch", 301.

<sup>53</sup> Holmes (1885; 2004: 50).

<sup>54</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. x, 569 note\* on "Plutarch". See also Berry (1961: 35).

Emerson's deployment of Plutarchan *Lives* and moral treatises ranged from overt description (when recommending Plutarch's oeuvre to readers) to textual borrowings of anecdotes or phrase. One group of essays that draws heavily – if implicitly – on Plutarch is *Representative Men*. The essays began as a series of lectures which he later published as essays on six rather disparate figures published in 1850,<sup>55</sup> each selected for representing a particular type: Plato is the philosopher, Swedenborg the mystic, Montaigne the sceptic, Shakespeare the poet, Napoleon the man of the world and Goethe the writer.

In the opening section, titled "Uses of Great Men",<sup>56</sup> Emerson outlines his subjects' exemplary role, a concept familiar from the prefaces of Plutarch's *Lives*. The similarities were evident enough to contemporaries like John Albee, who encountered the book as a young boy and instantly connected it with Plutarch. He had never heard of Emerson but when he spotted the book, "Its title, *Representative Men*, attracted me, because I had just been reading Plutarch's *Lives*, and for the first time had been aroused by the reading of any book. Those Greek and Roman men moved my horizon some distance from its customary place. The titles of the books were at least cousins, and I wondered if there had been any representative men since Epaminondas and Scipio".<sup>57</sup>

Emerson positions his great men in a broad historical context, and draws a link between his intellectual heroes and those of classical times, outlining a list of men, "from Coriolanus and Gracchus, down to Pitt, Lafayette, Wellington, Webster, Lamartine", thus establishing continuity between present and past.<sup>58</sup> Nor is he averse to inserting himself in the narrative, as Plutarch so often does. Towards the start of Montaigne he warns the reader of personal bias and explains its source:

And yet, since the personal regard which I entertain for Montaigne may be unduly great, I will, under the shield of this prince of egotists, offer, as an apology for electing him as the representative of skepticism, a word or two to explain how my love began and grew for this admirable gossip.

A single odd volume of Cotton's translation of the Essays remained to me from my father's library, when a boy. It lay long neglected, until, after many years, when I was newly escaped from college, I read the book, and procured the remaining volumes. I remember the delight and wonder

<sup>55</sup> Packer (1995; 2007: 174).

<sup>56</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. IV, "Representative Men", 3.

<sup>57</sup> Albee (1903) 15; also quoted in Edward Emerson's notes to "Representative Men", Emerson (1876; 1883; 1903) vol. IV, 300–301.

<sup>58</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. IV, "Representative Men": Uses of Great Men, 15.

in which I lived with it. It seemed to me as if I had myself written the book, in some former life, so sincerely it spoke to my thought and experience.<sup>59</sup>

For Berry, the early sections of *Representative Men* are “in the spirit of those who valued Plutarch the educator. Indeed,” Berry proceeds, referring to Plutarch’s statements about the inspirational and exemplary nature of biography in the *Life of Timoleon*, “it is Plutarch himself”.<sup>60</sup>

Yet Emerson’s response to Plutarch’s *Lives*, informed by an awareness of belatedness, avoids simplistic imitation. The figures selected are a diverse group, literary and intellectual rather than political, with the exception of Napoleon. Rather than straight biography, what *Representative Men* offers is a critique of the men’s actions and laudatory pronouncements on their genius or judgements on the literary output of the figures selected. Biographical detail is sporadic, and the narrative eschews a chronological path.<sup>61</sup> As Casper notes, “These were Emersonian essays on the meanings of different character types, with the particulars of individual lives subordinate”.<sup>62</sup> Instead of showing us the subjects’ triumphs followed by their flaws, Emerson tells us what they were, praising his subjects lavishly before outlining (usually more briefly) where it was that they fell short. Unafraid to undermine biography itself, he remarks that, “There is however a speedy limit to the use of heroes”.<sup>63</sup> Even exemplary figures become a bore in the end. The tension indicates an ambivalence towards past, and a desire not to adopt a purely imitative approach.

Emerson’s critique adheres to Transcendentalist principles, attempting to identify the essence of his subjects.<sup>64</sup> He grants to great men – as society’s forbears – an almost mythical power over contemporary society. Their examples sustain social values and should wield the deepest influence on the individuals, who are Emerson’s audience and readers. To study them is a critical pursuit. As he puts it, “Their names are wrought into the verbs of language, their works and effigies are in our houses, and every circumstance of the day recalls an anecdote of them. The search after the great man is the dream of youth and the most serious occupation of manhood”.<sup>65</sup> His is an unheroic, market-drive

59 Emerson (1903–1904) vol. iv, “Representative Men”: Montaigne; or, the skeptic, 162.

60 Specifically Emerson 14: “I cannot even hear of personal vigor of any kind, great power of performance, without fresh resolution”. Berry (1961: 86).

61 Casper (1999: 214).

62 Casper (1999: 214).

63 Emerson (1903–1904) vol. iv, “Representative Men”: Uses of Great Men, 27.

64 See Casper (1999: 213–214).

65 Emerson (1903–1904) vol. iv, “Representative Men”: Uses of Great Men, 3.

age, in which when one person succeeds, another loses. "Every child of the Saxon race is educated to wish to be first. It is our system",<sup>66</sup> Emerson suggests. If this zero-sum game is just the way things are, heroes offer guidance to the weary reader navigating the terrain.

One clear role of these representative men is that they provide the reader with models. Just as Plutarch's prefaces bestow on the *Lives* a hortatory purpose,<sup>67</sup> so Emerson explicitly asks the reader to learn from the examples he provides, noting the response that they inspire in him. "I cannot even hear of personal vigor of any kind, great power of performance, without fresh resolution. We are emulous of all that man can do".<sup>68</sup> In this context, he names Plutarch as an author whose words cannot be read "without a tingling of the blood". Their aspirational and pedagogical value, Emerson writes, is "the moral of biography".<sup>69</sup> (In the list of recommended reading that he outlined in *Books*, Emerson embraced Plutarch's view of biography and history – "In reading history, he is to prefer the history of individuals".<sup>70</sup>)

The concluding paragraphs of the programmatic opening section of *Representative Men* look firmly to the future and redefine the nature of heroism and greatness. In Emerson's view these qualities are regenerative, universal – perhaps even present in the reader. Great men are not rooted in a distant, unreachable time but are part of the present, and represent new possibilities. There will always be great men. This sense of bounteous, endless abundance is epitomised in imagery of seeds, corn and farming, since "The destiny of organized nature is amelioration, and who can tell its limits?"<sup>71</sup> Of nature, he writes, "Rotation is her remedy",<sup>72</sup> precluding too much wishful thinking of the past with an abundant, forward-looking vision. Emerson unpicks and democratises the notion of biography, moulding it to match the concerns of his nineteenth century American audience.

<sup>66</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. iv, "Representative Men": Uses of Great Men, 22.

<sup>67</sup> For example, *Life of Demetrius*, 1.6: "So, I think, we also shall be more eager to observe and imitate the better lives if we are not left without narratives of the blameworthy and the bad".

<sup>68</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. iv, "Representative Men": Uses of Great Men, 14.

<sup>69</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. iv, "Representative Men": Uses of Great Men, 14.

<sup>70</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. VII, "Books", 207.

<sup>71</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. iv, "Representative Men" Uses of Great Men, 35: "Yet, within the limits of human education and agency, we may say great men exist that there may be greater men. The destiny of organized nature is amelioration, and who can tell its limits? It is for man to tame the chaos; on every side, whilst he lives, to scatter the seeds of science and of song, that climate, corn, animals, men, may be milder, and the germs of love and benefit may be multiplied".

<sup>72</sup> Emerson (1876; 1883; 1903) vol. iv, "Representative Men": Uses of Great Men, 19.

## 5 Emerson and Plutarch's *Amatorius*

In *Books*, as we saw above, Emerson orientated his reader towards Plutarch, positioning him among the most important classical authors to study. Across Emerson's essays Plutarch's name frequently appears to represent culture or literature more broadly, merged with writers ancient and modern. In *Walter Savage Landor*, a eulogistic piece about an eccentric English poet (described by Emerson as "a faithful scholar"), he praises his subject's reading: "When we pronounce the names of Homer and Aeschylus; Horace, Ovid and Plutarch; Erasmus, Scaliger and Montaigne; Ben Jonson and Isaak Walton; Dryden and Pope, – we pass at once out of trivial associations and enter into a region of the purest pleasure accessible to human nature"<sup>73</sup> In *Thoughts on Modern Literature* Emerson couples Plutarch with Augustine, remarking that one reads "a few sentences or pages, and lo! the air swims with life, secrets of magnanimity and grandeur invite us on every hand, life is made up of them".<sup>74</sup> Later in the essay, Plutarch again resurfaces, this time bound with Plato and Paul, Saint Augustine, Spinoza, Chapman, Beaumont and Fletcher, Donne and Sir Thomas Browne. For Emerson, the reprinting of the texts of these men provides some reassurance of the wisdom of his own age.<sup>75</sup>

One essay that stands out for its Plutarchan themes is "Love", which originated as a lecture in the "Human Life" series he gave in Boston in 1838–1839.<sup>76</sup> The subject matter alludes to Plutarch's *Dialogue on love* (*Eroticus*, translated as *Amatorius* in Goodwin's edition) and at its start, Emerson hopes for the help of the Muses to arrive at an accurate "inward view" of love's truth.<sup>77</sup> The Plutarchan treatise takes the form of a dialogue, in which Plutarch's son Autobulus plays a dominant part, recounting a story that his father had told him. At an early stage in his marriage, Plutarch had visited the shrine of love, and met there a series of friends who began to discuss and gossip, inspired by a local scandal in which an older woman, Ismenodora, fell in love with – and later kidnapped – a younger man, Bacchon. The indirect retelling of events, and the dialogic format, recalls Plato's *Phaedrus*.<sup>78</sup> But in his lengthy speech

<sup>73</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. XII, "Walter Savage Landor", 341.

<sup>74</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. XII, "Thoughts on Modern Literature", 309–310.

<sup>75</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. XII, "Thoughts on Modern Literature", 311.

<sup>76</sup> Berry (1961: 174). According to Edward Emerson, parts of the essay featured in different lectures rather than as a whole, although the essay probably appeared as a lecture at the educational institutions, called Lyceums, which Emerson also lectured at, Edward Emerson's notes to "Love", Emerson (1876; 1883; 1903) vol. II, 411.

<sup>77</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. II, "Love", 170–171.

<sup>78</sup> See Hershbell (1988: 373), and Trapp's detailed analysis (1990: 155–161).

the character Plutarch adds a female dimension to the Platonic vision of *erōs*, re-envisioning Plato's account to form what Michel Foucault called "a new stylistics of love".<sup>79</sup>

In Emerson's version the narrative is reworked more conservatively in order to reframe love in the context of the nineteenth century. In essay rather than dialogue form, the argument builds on Plutarch's themes, punctuated with allusions to the Plutarchan text,<sup>80</sup> and offering readers an array of Plutarchan and Platonic concepts. In his early descriptions of love's effects, Emerson writes that

for the figures, the motions, the words of the beloved object are not, like other images, written in water, but, as Plutarch said, 'enamelled in fire,' and make the study of midnight: –

Thou art not gone being gone, where'er thou art,  
Thou leav'st in him thy watchful eyes, in him thy loving heart.<sup>81</sup>

The passage evokes a section in Plutarch's *Amatorius* where Autobulus tells us his father, Plutarch, described the passions of love (a section that "takes notice" of what Plato said), depicting the waking dreams that may afflict either man or woman as they talk to themselves dreamily (280): "For the sight seems to delineate other fancies in the water, that quickly glide away and slip out of the mind; whereas the imaginations of lovers, being as it were enamelled by fire, leave the images of things imprinted in the memory, moving, living, speaking, and remaining for a long time" (*Amatorius* 280). Later, in the essay's second and final explicit nod to Plutarch, Emerson tells us that Love provides a ladder upon which the lover climbs towards a vision of beauty, knowledge and the Divine, an idea that "Plato, Plutarch and Apuleius taught", and "Petrarch, Angelo and Milton".<sup>82</sup>

The Plutarchan treatise problematises the issue of age in the love of Ismenodora, a young widow, for a much younger boy, Bacchon. Emerson approaches the topic from a different, more personalised angle that would appeal to his audience, crafting a rhapsody on love's qualities and effects that

79 Foucault (1990) 210.

80 "In one essay, 'Love', he follows Plutarch's essay of the same title fairly closely, adopting similar subtopics and a similar viewpoint. He discards what does not appeal to him and from time to time elaborates a theme in his own way". Berry (1961: 173–174).

81 Emerson (1903–1904) vol. II, "Love", 175. The poetry quoted is from the *Epithalamium* of John Donne.

82 Emerson (1903–1904) vol. II, "Love", 182–183.

hold sway regardless of age. In Plutarch, Ismenodora arranged for friends to kidnap Bacchon and take him to her house, determined to have him at all costs. Emerson prefers a less controversial, more innocent version, in which a “rude village boy teases the girls about the school-house door”.<sup>83</sup> “By and by that boy wants a wife, and very truly and heartily will he know where to find a sincere and sweet mate, without any risk such as Milton deplores as incident to scholars and great men”.<sup>84</sup> Emerson reins the Plutarchan tale back, positioning love firmly in a heterosexual realm.

This love, however, creates a sense of individualism, as the lover becomes a (Platonic) mad man, and more than that, “twice a man”, “a new man, with new perceptions”,<sup>85</sup> who is exquisitely sensitive to Nature’s powers. The lover no longer belongs to family or society but to a more heavenly, philosophical realm. “[H]e is a person; *he* is a soul”, Emerson writes.<sup>86</sup> Yet the love Emerson depicts is practical, too. Like nature, it is subject to time’s abrasions, or in Emerson’s words “deciduous”.<sup>87</sup> It shifts as flaws manifest themselves, vices become known and charms themselves fade, and the lovers become a married couple and suffer their unromantic fate, “shut up in one house to spend in the nuptial society forty or fifty years”.<sup>88</sup> Love will meet a practical end, constrained within the bounds of society.

In *Love*, then, Emerson modernises a Plutarch topic for the nineteenth century, adjusting “the setting and background” and injecting “simple, New England words and expressions”.<sup>89</sup> The essay generates a tension between the idealism of love, symbolised by Plutarch, Plato and other poets, and the practicality of everyday life. Love, connected with individualism and enhanced perceptions of Nature, spurs the lover on the one hand towards the ladder of souls and on the other towards the decidedly everyday, unphilosophical marital home. Having presented readers with this conundrum, Emerson collapses it to argue that the ageing of the beloved and the evolution of feeling are part of the process of learning and experience. In his peroration he turns towards Plato. “But we need not fear that we can lose any thing by the progress of the soul. The soul may be trusted to the end. That which is so beautiful and attractive as these relations, must be succeeded and supplanted only by what is more beautiful, and so on for ever”.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. II, “Love”, 172.

<sup>84</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. II, “Love”, 173.

<sup>85</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. II, “Love”, 177.

<sup>86</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. II, “Love”, 178.

<sup>87</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. II, “Love”, 187.

<sup>88</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. II, “Love”, 187.

<sup>89</sup> Berry (1961: 185).

<sup>90</sup> Emerson (1903–1904) vol. II, “Love”, 188.

## 6 A Twentieth Century Plutarch

Plutarch was an effervescent presence in the nineteenth-century elite's frame of reference, if no longer in wider popular culture. Other writers, contiguous with but slightly later than Emerson, who show familiarity with Plutarch include Louisa May Alcott (1832–1888) and Margaret Fuller. Alcott's father, Amos Bronson Alcott, was an associate of Emerson's, a brilliant but wild figure who struggled to earn a living. Alcott's childhood diaries reveal a remarkable precocity in relation to her perceptions and her reading. She recalls that as a child she scribbled on the pages of the books in her father's library, which included "Bacon's Essays, Plutarch's Lives, and other works of a serious nature, my infant taste being for solid literature apparently", with wry humour.<sup>91</sup> Later, in the diaries, we find the 10-year-old Louisa writing that on Tuesday October 12, 1843, she had lessons, ironed, husked corn and then, "I read in Plutarch", before "making a verse" about sunset.<sup>92</sup> Her brief references to Plutarch show that his work was considered part of an official canon of books to read, particularly within Transcendentalist circles.

A more mature, though dispersed response to Plutarch is found in the writings of Margaret Fuller, a renowned Transcendentalist intellectual and advocate for women's rights, who studied Greek and Latin from the age of 6.<sup>93</sup> Fuller was a close friend of Emerson's and on May 30, 1837 wrote to him, "I have now of yours two vols of Milton, one of Jonson, one of Plutarch's Morals". She had clearly read Plutarch before then however. Her first published work was an exchange with George Bancroft published in 1834. He wrote a piece entitled "The influence of Slavery on the Political Revolutions in Rome", and she published a response, "In Defense of Brutus", in the *Boston Daily Advertiser*.<sup>94</sup> She "clinch[ed] her argument by citing Plutarch".<sup>95</sup>

Plutarch continued to wield influence into the twentieth century. John Steinbeck read Plutarch, Xenophon, Herodotus and Thomas Malory.<sup>96</sup> In letters addressed to his friend and editor, Pascal Covici, which he wrote while writing *East of Eden*, he said his novel might be "a kind of parallel biography"<sup>97</sup> – a term that suggests (as Robert DeMott notes) a quasi-Plutarchan interest in the moral dimensions of his characters.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Alcott ed. Cheney (1889: 27).

<sup>92</sup> Alcott ed. Cheney (1889: 37).

<sup>93</sup> Dimock (2006: 61).

<sup>94</sup> Dimock (2006: 211 n. 28).

<sup>95</sup> Dimock (2006: 61).

<sup>96</sup> Wald (2011: 673).

<sup>97</sup> Steinbeck (1969; 2001: 7).

<sup>98</sup> DeMott (1996: 57).

What is perhaps evident is that Plutarch's weight in the New World originally derived from his position in the Old – the fact that neoclassical fervour reigned in eighteenth century Britain and spread from there to the colonies.<sup>99</sup> Subsequently, however, Plutarch's American *Nachleben* took on its own peculiar sheen, mediated by translations and new ideologies. In the hands of Emerson and other, more modern authors, then, Plutarch's work is made new again, in interpretations that are stretched, rewritten and repurposed in variegated American directions.

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99 Shalev (2009: 99).

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# Plutarch's Fortune in Spain

*Aurelio Pérez Jiménez*

## 1 The Beginnings\*

In his *Castigos é documentos para bien vivir que dio a su fijo* ("Advises and Instruction on how to lead a good life which he gave his son", c. 1290), Sancho IV of Castile quoted an anecdote from Plutarch. Yet he did not borrow it first-hand but had learnt about the Chaeronean from John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*. Even so, any reflection on Plutarch's fortune in Spain must start from such early (pre-Renaissance) references, despite the fact that they are attached to the pseudo-Plutarchan *Institutio Traiani*. The Italica-born emperor (citing Plutarch as his teacher) saw the inclusion of our author in the culture of Spain as a patriotic bonus. Plutarch also reached the early Castilian writers through Petrarch, who cites *On the control of anger* in his works.<sup>1</sup> As for the actual Plutarch, his *Parallel lives* soon attracted the attention of Juan Fernández de Heredia (c. 1310–1396), Grand Master of the Knights Hospitaller from 1377. This influential Aragonese nobleman, connected both to the Papal Court at Avignon and the kings of Castile and Aragon, had a translation of the *Lives* made into Aragonese, which he then used for many passages of his *Grant Crónica de los Conquistadores* ("Grand Chronicle of the Conquerors") and *Grant Crónica de Espanya* ("Grand Chronicle of Spain").<sup>2</sup>

The fortune of Plutarch in the Iberian Peninsula (including Spain and Portugal) has been enormous ever since.<sup>3</sup> His influence has been felt in historical accounts, biographies (for which those of Plutarch were models), chronicles and, above all, treatises on instruction, religion, philosophy and ethics. The conservative Platonism of the Chaeronean author and his Aristotelian ethical ideals turned the *Moralia* into a source for pagan wisdom for the crusty thinkers of the Counter-Reformation. Plutarch's fabled Christianisation (Renaissance biographies of Plutarch stated that he was baptised by Origen) relieved the

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<sup>1</sup> Pérez Jiménez (1990: 229–230).

<sup>2</sup> See Redondo (2011) and Redondo-Sancho Montés (2007) on the importance of Plutarch in the Valencian and Catalan Humanism of the 1300s–1400s.

<sup>3</sup> See Pérez Jiménez (1990; 2014); Bergua (1995); García Gual (2017).

consciences of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish clerical writers, who had recourse to the *Lives* and the *Moralia* as a way of imparting authority to their own ethical and theological considerations. They also quoted his name next to prestigious authors such as Plato, Aristotle, Lucian, Seneca or Tacitus, either as a display or erudition or as an instrument of authority and confirmation of Platonic-Christian orthodoxy.

## 2 Translations

Other factors helped shape Plutarch's success. The most important one in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Spain, where only some elementary Greek was taught in Universities, was the role of translations.<sup>4</sup>

Concerning the *Parallel lives*, the translation of Heredia in the 1300s had the honour of being the first one that rendered Plutarch's biographical works into a Western vernacular. Otherwise it had little influence, although it did serve as the basis for the first Italian translation, made by the humanist Coluccio Salutati.<sup>5</sup> The first attempt at a Castilian version is an incunabulum by Fernández de Palencia (Seville 1491), based on Latin renderings by Italian humanists in the 1200s–1300s. Its dubious literary merits explain why Diego Gracián de Alderete (1494–1584) called it "Deaths" rather than "Lives". In the mid-1500s, interest in the *Lives* is reflected in the first translations from the Greek (*Theseus-Romulus*, *Lycurgus-Numa*, *Solon-Publicola* and, using a different foliation, *Themistocles-Camillus*) which Francisco de Enzinas (1518–1552) published in Strasbourg (1551). Under the pseudonym "Pedro de Salinas" he was probably behind an earlier paraphrase of *Cimon-Lucullus* (1547).

The seventeenth century proved less prolific, though the moral and political interest in the Chaeronean meant the appearance of substantial paraphrases of some *Lives*: *Brutus* by Francisco de Quevedo (Madrid 1654) and *Numa*, with religious and philosophical commentaries, by the Aragonese Antonio Costa (Saragossa 1672). In the following centuries, the importance of the sixteenth-century Latin translations from Stephanus' Greek edition and the success of Amyot's French version are probably responsible for the decrease in the number of Spanish translations of Plutarchan works. It is not until the second half of the eighteenth century that the first complete Spanish translation of the *Parallel lives*, by the Soria-born humanist Antonio Ranz Romanillos (1759–1830)

<sup>4</sup> See Lasso de la Vega (1962). The following is an abridgement of Pérez Jiménez (2009 and 2014).

<sup>5</sup> Álvarez Rodríguez (2009: CLVI). See also Becchi in this volume.

would appear. This excellent translation has been extensively used until our days. During the 1800s, we have a *Theseus* (1821) by the French-based erudit José Marchena y Ruiz Cueto, known as "Abbot Marchena".<sup>6</sup> Other than the full Catalan version by Carles Riba for the Fundació Bernat Metge (1926–1946)<sup>7</sup> and the Castilian versions of several *Lives* by Emilio Crespo (*Alexander-Caesar, Pericles-Fabius Maximus, Alcibiades-Coriolanus*, 1983), Guzmán Guerra (*Alexander*, 1986 and *Alexander-Caesar*, 2003), Jorge Bergua (*Alexander-Caesar*, 1997), Ozaeta Gálvez (*Alcibiades-Coriolanus, Sertorius-Eumenes*, 1998) and Francisco Martos Montiel (*Demetrius-Antony*, 2007), the most important one is the complete translation in the collection *Biblioteca Clásica Gredos* (1985–2009) by several authors, which includes ample introductions and notes.

Although they appeared later than the *Lives*, the *Moralia* fared better. By the mid-sixteenth century an almost complete Castilian translation was available, that of Gracián de Alderete (Alcalá 1548), reprinted in Salamanca (1571) with some additions. A few minor works were translated even earlier, for example the *Sayings of kings and commanders* (Alcalá 1533), also by Gracián, and *On the love of wealth* (Valladolid 1538) by Alonso Virués Ruiz. Slightly later are *On the control of anger* and *Advice on marriage* (Antwerp 1551) by Diego de Astudillo, *How to profit from your enemies* (c. 1554) by Gaspar Hernández, *That we ought not to borrow* (1556) by Juan Páez de Castro, and *Sayings of kings and commanders* (Saragossa 1590) by Pedro Simón Abril, one of the greatest Spanish grammarians during the 1500s.<sup>8</sup>

Although it is a Latin translation, reference must be made here to the *Natural Questions* by Pedro Juan Núñez, printed in Valencia (1554) as an appendix (ff. 184r–192v) to Theodore of Gaza's version of Aristotle and Alexander of Aphrodisias' *Problēmata*. It is an elegant and close rendition made directly from the Greek, and accompanied by original notes.<sup>9</sup> Between the 1500s and the recent (Madrid 1985–2004) translation of the *Moralia* included in the *Biblioteca Clásica Gredos*, there is next to nothing. During the seventeenth century, Quevedo translated several passages from Plutarch's anti-stoic treatises (Brussels 1666) while in the 1700s Pedro Estalá (1757–1815), an *afrancesado* ("Francophile") like Marchena, seems to have translated the *Doctrines of the philosophers* (1793), according to a letter to Juan Pablo Forner, but this was apparently never printed.<sup>10</sup> In the nineteenth century there are references to a

<sup>6</sup> Asencio Sánchez (2010).

<sup>7</sup> Mestre-Gómez (2005).

<sup>8</sup> Morales Ortiz (2000: 139–145).

<sup>9</sup> Morales Ortiz (1998) and (2000: 90).

<sup>10</sup> Bergua Cavero (1995: 19).

selection of the *Moralia*, adapted from the French, by Enrique Ataide (Madrid 1803). Since then, and besides the complete translation published in the *BCG* which has been already mentioned, we have the translations of the following works: *On Isis and Osiris* by F. Gallach Pales (1930), based on the French translation by M. Meunier (Paris 1924); *On reading the poets* by Scazzocchio (1957); *On the education of children* by Palli (1966); *Pythian Dialogues, On Isis and Osiris, Dialogue on love and On music* (1987) by García Valdés; *On the malice of Herodotus* by Magallón and Ramón Palerm (1989); *Dialogue on love* by Guzmán Guerra (1990) then Gilabert (1991); *Political precepts* by Gascó (1991), García López (2009) and Caballero, who also included a version of *On exile* (2009). A first volume of the *Moralia*, including the *On the education of children* and *On reading the poets* has been recently (2013) translated by Ángel Martín and published in Catalan by the Fundació Bernat Metge.

### 3 Plutarch's Literary Influence

The interest in and cultural impact of Plutarch in Spain from the late 1400s onwards is evidenced by the above translations, but it is best attested in the quotations and references which are scattered among several genres ever since. The *Lives* and the *Moralia* proposed themes, topics, characters, grammatical examples and literary models for the Spanish intelligentsia during the Golden Age of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries:<sup>11</sup> it had a bearing on the formation of the modern states, Spain included, by opening up new geographical horizons, and providing fodder for new political or administrative theories, as well as doctrinal ideals to religious movements of this time, either directly or via Erasmus. During the Enlightenment, Plutarch would occupy a crucial place in the new rationalist Humanism. His contribution would be important to the defenders of the less privileged strata of society and of new paedagogical principles. He also mattered as support or model for historians, biographers, erudites and novelists, besides his traditional importance for theological and philosophical thought. Finally, from the nineteenth century to the present time, his ideas are recurrent in political oratory, theatre, poetry and, just like other Classical authors, as a prime source for historical novels.

In all these processes and as far as Spain is concerned, Plutarch has had much to say, transcending the Spanish editions (Castilian and Catalan alike) that have been presented above. In fact, the influence of such Spanish translations on prose writers, poets and playwrights during the last five hundred

<sup>11</sup> Pérez Jiménez (forthcoming).

years has not been as substantial as one would think. It may however be more keenly felt now, in the twenty-first century, at a time when knowledge of the original Greek texts and its Latin versions is circumscribed to the few who have a degree in Classics. But in earlier times some intellectuals could read the original Aldine Greek editions, while those unable to do so either knew enough Latin to consult the translations made during the 1300s–1500s, or, at the very least, received some Plutarchan whiffs from Erasmus, Shakespeare's plays and the excellent French translations by Amyot. In any case and irrespective of the kind of actual texts being read, in the last five centuries the name of Plutarch has been – and still remains – indisputably popular among people of culture in Spain.

Editorial limitations prevent any detailed exposition of all the references made across several genres and intellectual milieux. Concerning the Golden Age, the reader may consult my contribution in the *Cambridge Companion to Plutarch*,<sup>12</sup> for the other periods, a thematic guide will be found in *A Companion to Plutarch* (Wiley-Blackwell).<sup>13</sup> In the remainder of this chapter I offer an overview of some key case-studies from each century and a more detailed analysis of one work that I deem significant.

#### 4      Plutarch in the Golden Age

As is usually the case with other facets of Spanish culture during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the name “Golden Age” that applies to these two centuries of Spanish cultural history is perfectly suited to describe the fortune of Plutarch in the Iberian Peninsula. The *Lives* inspired characters (Cleopatra, Mark Antony, Alexander, Caesar) and themes of famous playwrights such as López de Castro, Calderón or Lope de Vega, and the literary structure of biographers and historians such as Pérez del Pulgar, Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda and several chroniclers of the Indies, who saw in them a model for the integration of the New World in a European, that is, Spanish, cultural framework. The *Moralia*, on the other hand, were a habitual source for State theorists, philosophers and theologians, who were particularly concerned with defending Catholicism against the Reformation. More generally, Plutarch provided themes or lent the authority of his name to genres as diverse as the novel, patriotic and intimate poetry, philosophical and theological essay, erudite miscellany, philological commentary and exegesis of symbols in emblem books.

<sup>12</sup> Pérez Jiménez (forthcoming).

<sup>13</sup> Pérez Jiménez (2014: 559–573).

The latter was a new genre which was made known in Spain, as in the rest of Europe, by the spreading of the works of Alciato and became very popular in the Hispanic territories on both sides of the Atlantic: names like Hernando de Soto, Juan de Horozco, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Núñez de Cepeda, Saavedra, Juan de Solórzano, as well as the commentaries of Alciato El Brocense, Mal Lara, Palmireno and Juan de Valencia, are good examples of the trend.<sup>14</sup>

Choosing a figure that can encapsulate the importance of Plutarch during the period is not an easy task, due to the cultural richness of those times and the position of authority enjoyed by the Chaeronean. These last few years, in fact, have seen an abundance of monographs on the relationship between Plutarch and the following people or genres: Beuter;<sup>15</sup> Luisa Sigea;<sup>16</sup> emblem books<sup>17</sup> (including Mal Lara, Solórzano, Villava and Saavedra); Guevara;<sup>18</sup> Vives;<sup>19</sup> Ginés de Sepúlveda;<sup>20</sup> Mexía;<sup>21</sup> Fray Luis de Granada;<sup>22</sup> Cristóbal de Villalón;<sup>23</sup> Melchor de Ortega;<sup>24</sup> Gómez Miedes;<sup>25</sup> Antonio Agustín;<sup>26</sup> Cervantes;<sup>27</sup> Juan de Pineda;<sup>28</sup> Francisco Cascales;<sup>29</sup> Lorenzo de Zamora;<sup>30</sup> Pedro de Valencia;<sup>31</sup> Quevedo;<sup>32</sup> Juan de Torquemada;<sup>33</sup> Gracián;<sup>34</sup> Solórzano;<sup>35</sup> religious oratory;<sup>36</sup> and Fernández de Córdoba.<sup>37</sup>

All this notwithstanding, here I want to pay particular attention to the *Scholasticus* (1530/1540), a piece by Cristóbal de Villalón which illustrates

<sup>14</sup> Pérez Jiménez (2002).

<sup>15</sup> Sancho Montés (2005).

<sup>16</sup> Pérez Jiménez (1998).

<sup>17</sup> Pérez Jiménez (2003a), (2003b), (2003c), (2005) and (2006).

<sup>18</sup> García Gual (1988), (1991), (1998) and (2000).

<sup>19</sup> Narro Sánchez (2011) and (2013).

<sup>20</sup> Ramírez de Verger (1990).

<sup>21</sup> Cherchi (1993).

<sup>22</sup> Correia Martins (2011).

<sup>23</sup> Indelli (1992).

<sup>24</sup> Aguilar Perdomo (1999).

<sup>25</sup> Ramos Maldonado (1999).

<sup>26</sup> Pérez Jiménez (2007).

<sup>27</sup> Ramón Palerm (1999).

<sup>28</sup> Ramón Palerm (2001).

<sup>29</sup> Alemán Illán (2005).

<sup>30</sup> Nieto Ibáñez (2007).

<sup>31</sup> Nieto Ibáñez (2005) and (2013).

<sup>32</sup> Díaz Martínez (2002).

<sup>33</sup> Santana Henríquez (2013).

<sup>34</sup> Berberana Huerta-Rodríguez González (2013).

<sup>35</sup> Pino Campos (2013).

<sup>36</sup> Herrero Salgado (1994).

<sup>37</sup> Pérez Molina-Guzmán Arias (1991).

the use made of Plutarch as a supplementary source. The work is a dialogue, held by several intellectuals from the University of Salamanca, on the Ideal Scholar – a utopian motif very much in vogue during the Renaissance. The range of themes presented and their erudite treatment, with frequent recourse to Classical sources, mirror the taste for the erudite miscellany among those intellectuals which one can find in other works by Villalón (*Crotalón*, *Viaje a Turquía*, or *Ingeniosa comparación entre lo antiguo y lo presente*). In all of them the debt that the author owes to Plutarch is plain to see.

The leading voice in the four books that compose the *Scholasticus* is a humanist, Hernán Pérez Oliva, on whom the Plutarchan sway is evident; in one of his interventions he even states that he has finished a translation of *How to profit from your enemies* (II 14). It is not strange, then, that he is the person who most frequently quotes Plutarch. Almost the whole of Chapter I 10 is devoted to his narration and reflections on the story of Solon and Croesus; Plutarch is his main source of a number of chapters (II 7, using *On the fortune and virtue of Alexander the Great*; II 10 and III 11, using *On the education of children*); and the last chapter of the volume (IV 17) concludes with examples from the *Sayings of kings and commanders*, though the speaker never mentions our author. The other characters (at least the main ones) are not averse to peppering their speeches with Plutarchan references either. D. Francisco de Navarra, who had just been appointed University Principal in the year when the dialogue is set (1528), begins his speech in ch. III 1 by quoting his name; D. Álvaro de Mendoza quotes him on I 3; D. Antonio de Velasco, keener to read Christian, rather than pagan, texts, makes his own tribute nonetheless in III 9 (and admits that he reads Cicero, Plutarch, Plato and Seneca – in that particular order); D. Francisco de Bobadilla, more favourable to Classical authors, praises him in III 9 (“Is there anything in Plutarch that does not have a holy taste?” [“¿Qué tiene Plutarco que no sepa a sancto?”]) and again in IV 17; D. Francisco de la Vega quotes him IV 4 and 5, and D. Alfonso Osorio (made Principal in 1533), in his speech in favour of women (IV 8), places a feminist speech by Clarichea in the Roman Senate in the presence of Trajan and Plutarch himself. His description of Plutarch could not be more flattering: “Among those there was that wisest and most eloquent orator, Plutarch the Chaeronean: I daresay (and I do not think that I am wrong) that there has been no man in the world after him” (“Entre todos los que tuvo fue aquel sapientissimo varon y eloquente orador Plutarco Cheroneo: varon (que sin pensar que me engaño) me atrevo a decir: que despues del no sucedio en el mundo otro tal”).

Moreover, Plutarch is included in the roster of canonical authors, sharing the largest number of quotations with Plato, Seneca, Cicero, Lucian, Xenophon, Macrobius, and Aulus Gellius. He is respectfully treated as a “great philosopher”

(“gran philosopho”, I 3); “most famous orator” (“muy famoso orador”, II 7); “great Plutarch” (“gran Plutarco”, IV 4), and serves as an authority in questions of natural philosophy (II 13) together with Seneca, and in questions of morals next to Jerome, Augustine and John Chrysostom. As for quotations, sometimes they cover whole chapters or else are essential to the literary structure of others (as noted above on Hernán Pérez de Oliva). In most cases the attribution of material to Plutarch is explicit, but there are cases in which the source remains unacknowledged, even though we have little doubt as to the author: see for instance the anecdotes on the behaviour of the tyrants Clearchus and Aristodemus (I 3), drawn from *To an uneducated ruler* 781D; the reference to Numa, Priscus and Sulla (II 7), from *On the fortune of the Romans* 318B–C; the story of the meeting of Demetrius and Stilpo, the source of which (*On the education of children* 5F) is stated in I 13 but goes twice under no name later in the text (III 6 and IV 7); or the famous death of Archimedes, taken from *Marcellus* 19.8–12 but not referenced. The collection of apophthegms that Pérez de Oliva used at the end of the dialogue (IV 17) is also included without an author, but in this case the Principal does mention Plutarch at the beginning of the chapter: “Plutarch and Macrobius and many other excellent men in their wise and grave books taught us how best to use nicknames, as the former showed in his *Apophthegms* and the latter in the Seventh Book of the *Saturnalia*” (“Plutarcho y Macrobio y otros muchos ex̄celentes varones en sus libros sabios y graues nos enseñaron a saber motejar: como nos lo muestra el vno en los Apothemas y el otro en el Saturnal Septimo”). But the usual custom, as stated, is to reference the works from which quotations are drawn, which usually derive from the *Moralia* and less frequently, from the *Lives*. All this showcases the relevance of Plutarch for Renaissance intellectuals (both clerical and laymen) who were so worthily represented by the several dialogists of *Scholasticus*.

## 5 Plutarch in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Spanish Culture

Albeit less keenly felt than in other European countries, the Enlightenment and those revolutionary movements which opened the doors to the present-day world also reached Spain. Extensive reading of Plutarch is evident in important philologists and literary critics at the time, such as Luzán (1702–1774) or the two erudites Mayans i Siscar (1699–1781) and Menéndez Pelayo (1856–1912). But one of the main purposes of the *ilustrados* was to rescue their Spanish countrymen from their deep-rooted religious customs, ignorance and superstitions. Father Feijoo (1742–1760) made frequent use of Plutarch for this purpose, particularly in his *Teatro crítico universal* and *Cartas eruditas y curiosas*.

Feijoo was mainly a writer of essays, a genre that would become consolidated during the nineteenth century (Juan Valera) together with political discourse (Emilio Castelar). Valera also mentions Plutarch in his novels, some characters of which make displays of erudition by referencing his name. Naturally enough, biography, a genre visited by the likes of José Quintana and Fernán Caballero in the 1700s and Vicente Barrantes or Nicolás Díaz Pérez in the 1800s, would be modelled after the *Parallel lives*, and both authors and critics are well aware of this fact. Characters from the *Lives* as well as thoughts from the *Moralia* are present too in the philosophical, folklorist and historical novels by authors such as Montengón y Paret, Father Isla, Estébanez Calderón, Mesonero Romanos, Unamuno, Baroja, Azorín, Silverio Lanza or Galdós;<sup>38</sup> and it would also become a theatrical treasure trove: Cándido María Trigueros would borrow some passages from the *Minor parallels*,<sup>39</sup> Zorrilla would stage the *Aspis of Cleopatra* and Victor Balaguer, a late nineteenth-century Catalan playwright would, just like Shakespeare had done, revisit Plutarch's *Coriolanus*.

One of the most relevant contributions to the cultural progress of Spain during these two centuries is the defence of women's rights. In treatises such as Feijoo's *Defensa de las mujeres* (1726) one could see the first steps of a movement that raised the flag of feminism and which would ultimately achieve its goals only in the following centuries. Hence I find it most appropriate to discuss Josefa Amar y Borbón's *Discurso sobre la educación física y moral de las mugeres* (Madrid 1790) as a representative work of this period. This illustrious Saragossan (1749–1833), just like Inés Joyés and the Málaga-born M<sup>a</sup> Rosa Gálvez, belonged to a group of women who advocated feminine instruction between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Of the three, Amar was the one most influenced by Plutarch. Her oldest Spanish role-model was Luisa Sigea (whose biography would be written by Carolina Coronado by the mid-nineteenth century) and hence she put her name on top of the list of women who shaped her work (Prologue, xxii); but among her sources there is not only a direct reading of the *Moralia* in Gracián's translation (p. 30, 174) but also a catalogue of Spanish humanists who made extensive use of the Chaeronean: Fray Luis de Granada, Fray Luis de León, Andrés Mendo, Quevedo, Gracián's *Criticón* (p. 173); Pérez de Oliva, Luis Mexía, Vives, Pedro de Rúa's *Cartas* (who vindicated the real Plutarch in his criticism to Guevara), and Juan de Orozco's *Emblemas* (p. 175); Juan Costa's *Gobierno del ciudadano* and *Diálogos*, where the influence of Plutarch, she claimed, is patent (p. 325); Pedro de Luján (p. 326) and Cristóbal Pérez de Herrera (p. 327). Naturally, Erasmus holds a

<sup>38</sup> Pérez Jiménez (2014).

<sup>39</sup> Pabón (1972) and Ibáñez Chacón (2015).

place among her sources as well (p. 323). As for Plutarch, she states (p. 316) that her main sources are the *On the education of children* (quoted several times both in the original Greek and in Spanish), *Whether virtue can be taught* and *Advice on marriage* (which she knew through Diego de Astudillo's 1604 translation but quoted in Greek sometimes, for instance on p. 219 = 140C). Besides, she used a number of passages from other works to sustain her argument or else as illustration: the *Life of Cato the Elder* (Prologue, iv; p. 50), the *Life of Lycurgus* (p. 4), the *Life of Alcibiades* (p. 50) and the *Spartan sayings* (p. 141, referred to as *Preceptos Lacedemonios*). All in all, Josefa Amar's reading list proves that Plutarch ranked very highly among Enlightenment and Neoclassical reformers.

## 6 Plutarch's Presence Today (Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries)

Plutarch's influence in Spain has continued to be considerable since the 1900s. Following a tradition that dates back to the Renaissance, the fortunes and misfortunes of the Plutarchan characters are still regularly staged. In a conversation held with Julio Imbert, Jacinto Grau, a referencial playwright during the early twentieth century, was positive as to the influence of Plutarch: "I want you to read what I will tell you: everything by Plutarch" ("Yo quiero que usted lea lo que yo le indique: todo Plutarco").<sup>40</sup> Similar remarks apply to poetry, where his influence is evident on some poets and philologists (such as Cernuda, Luis Alberto de Cuenca, Ruiz Noguera, Salinas Torres, Brines, J. M<sup>a</sup> Álvarez) and naturally on philosophical essayists, particularly Ortega y Gasset<sup>41</sup> and Zubiri.<sup>42</sup> But if we are to find the genre where the Plutarchan *Lives* are put to the best use, we must look towards historical novels. Though there are notable precedents, the treatment of Classical themes in such novels has become an ever-growing subject matter and one of the main vehicles for the transmission of Plutarch's biographic work during the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Characters such as Brutus (Gómez Rufo), Antony and Cleopatra (Terenci Moix), Theseus (Martínez García), Pericles (Rubio Esteban), Alexander (Negrete) and many others have been incorporated from Plutarch (used sometimes as a supplementary source) right into Spanish novels.<sup>43</sup> The re-creation of Roman history is a standard theme,<sup>44</sup> but Greek heroes are

<sup>40</sup> Imbert (2006: 136).

<sup>41</sup> Pino Campos (2012).

<sup>42</sup> Pino Campos (2017).

<sup>43</sup> Pérez Jiménez (2014: 572).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

not lacking either. A notable example is José Ángel Mañas, whose 2007 novel *The Secret of the Oracle* possesses many literary merits; but the Plutarchan influence is diluted here by the addition of Arrian, Quintus Curtius and Diodorus Siculus. Another is a novelist who illustrates the keen interest in Plutarchan themes during the early twenty-first century, by focusing on a character from the *Lives*, namely, Pyrrhus. Luis Fernando Ángel Cuervo (Gijón 1947), a doctor in medicine interested in art and history who has held political posts in his native region (Asturias), has devoted two novels (the first ones of a planned tetralogy) to this character. In opposition to other writers, historians or philologists who were able to read the Greek original (such as Óscar Martínez), Ángel Cuervo exemplifies the importance of Ranz Romanillos' translation even today. The titles of these two volumes are *Pirro* (*El amanecer del águila*) ("Pyrrhus, the dawn of the eagle", Madrid 2011) and *Pirro: II. El resurgir del Fénix* ("Pyrrhus, II. The rising of the phoenix", Madrid 2012). Their debt to Plutarch is evident from the start, although Polybius, Appian, and Titus Livius are also mentioned as sources, together with modern historiographical works.

A work of fiction, the novel incorporates imaginative themes (sometimes coloured by personal experience), but this is always reined in by the Plutarchan text. The main timeline for the work is provided by Chapters 1–10 of the *Life of Pyrrhus*, together with Chapters 14–30 of the *Life of Demetrius* (the second volume uses Chapters 11–20 of *Pyrrhus* as one of its main sources). The narrator, Angelus, introduces himself as the son of Angelus, a friend of Pyrrhus' father, Aeacides. Angelus was Pyrrhus' elder by two years and part of the retinue, led by Angelus and Megacles' father, Androclides, which safely conveyed Pyrrhus to Megara.<sup>45</sup> Of the several characters of the novel, some are directly drawn from Plutarch: Achilles (the Macedonian who crossed the river with the baby Pyrrhus in his arms during the flight), Megacles (Pyrrhus' general in Italy) or Cineas (the orator who served as ambassador during the Italian expedition). Others, such as Bardyllis (son of Glauций), Nymphaea (wife of the narrator) and Aspetus, Angelus' brother, are hinted at in Plutarchan texts, while others are completely fictional. Even so, Ángel Cuervo follows Plutarch's text faithfully and sometimes reproduces Ranz Romanillos' translation almost to the letter.

In terms of its structure, the novel is built on two parallel narratives: a fictional one, narrating the life of Angelus (whom he turns into a physician, just like the Achilles who had helped save Pyrrhus), and a historical one, which draws heavily on the aforementioned biographies of Plutarch. The two

45 This was probably the Thessalian city mentioned by Stephanus of Byzantium, rather than the one by the Isthmus of Corinth near Attica, as suggested by the novelist.

narratives are craftily intertwined using several devices: first of all, Angelus has a number of chance meetings (as a physician, soldier or trader) with Pyrrhus and his own brother Aspetus (who is always part of the royal retinue). These meetings make him a relevant figure in several events drawn from Plutarch, such as the love affairs between Lamia and Damo with Demetrius, Demetrius' marriage to Deidamia, the Battle of Ipsus, the co-regency agreements between Pyrrhus and Neoptolemus, or Pyrrhus' discovery of Lysimachus' deception using a false letter in order for him to sign a treaty against Demetrius. Secondly, the narrator obtains news from letters sent to him by Peisistratus of Mantinea (Glaucias' crowning of Pyrrhus, *Pyrrh.* 3.5 = p. 116) or his brother Aspetus (Neoptolemus' attempt on Pyrrhus, and his subsequent death). Finally, we read about Angelus' own thoughts or comments to his son (Pyrrhus' marriages and offspring, *Pyrrh.* 9.3 = p. 402), to whom the book is dedicated as a book of memoirs. Correspondences between the events told by Plutarch and their presence in the novel are found everywhere; it suffices to say that the writer combines parts from the *Life of Pyrrhus* with others from the *Life of Demetrius* – the latter source being more frequently used for the task. Sometimes information from both pieces are combined but, all in all, the *Pyrrhus* provides the historical frame for pages 15–93 (*Pyrrh.* 2–3), 116–117 (*Pyrrh.* 4), 267–270 (*Pyrrh.* 4) and 299–410 (*Pyrrh.* 4.5–10), while *Demetrius* is used for the rest: 95–116 (*Demet.* 14–16), 117–267 (*Demet.* 25–30) and 271–297 (*Demet.* 28–30). It is evident, therefore, that the fictional narrative heavily relies on Plutarch in its entirety.

## 7      Conclusions and Final Thoughts

We can rest assured that Plutarch's fortune in Spain from the sixteenth century onwards has not been inferior to that in Italy, France, England or Germany: in fact, it has fared better in Spain than in some of these countries. The *Moralia* were widely read, mostly in Latin or Spanish translations, during periods of strong opinions, whether ideological (ethical and theological, as in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) or paedagogical (eighteenth and nineteenth centuries). The *Lives* on the other hand have spawned plays, heroic literature, and historiographical and archaeological research, but also poetry and – during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries – historical novels. As regards research on Plutarch, Spanish scholars have also contributed their efforts and have been filling the ranks of the *International Plutarch Society* since 1987; one could confidently say that through the academic and cultural organisations

focusing on Plutarch, this important literary figure of the Classical world has enjoyed a revival the influence of which, thanks to the new translations, will last for the foreseeable future.

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# A Sage and a Kibbutznik: Plutarch in Modern Hebrew Literature and Culture

*Eran Almagor*

Plutarch's portrayal of the Jews in his writings finds its mirror image, as it were, in the way he himself has been portrayed in modern Hebrew (or Neo-Hebrew) literature and publications.<sup>1</sup> Plutarch's depiction of the Jews is mostly favourable,<sup>2</sup> although their presence in his works is marginal.<sup>3</sup> Correspondingly, the references to Plutarch himself in Modern Hebrew works are mostly positive, yet he is seen to be an outsider, a position which paradoxically lends him both a scholarly and a moral authoritative position. The present chapter will study Plutarch's portrayal in two parts: the first part endeavours to offer a survey of the appearances of Plutarch in modern Hebrew literature, while the second one deals specifically with three Hebrew literary creations which bear the name of Plutarch, and seeks to consider the importance of Plutarch's reception in a modern Israeli context. As far as I know, this is the first time these studies are attempted.

## I

Jewish scholarly interest in Plutarch may have begun as part of the general European reacquaintance with the Chaeronean during the fourteenth century. The first example is probably that of the philosopher and controversialist Isaac Nathan Ben Kalonymus (early to mid-fifteenth century, Arles), in his book *Meammetz Koach* (*Prevail through Great Power*, after 1432), referring to Philip's siege of Athens and citing the sheep parable of *Dem.* 23.5–6.<sup>4</sup> Yet the first explicit appearance of Plutarch in Hebrew writings during the modern period comes from the seventeenth century, in the writings of the rabbi, printer,

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank the editors of this volume for their helpful comments and assistance.

<sup>2</sup> See Feldman (1996), cf. Latzarus (1920).

<sup>3</sup> Plutarch refers to Jews 18 times: *De sup.* 166A, 169C; *De Stoic. rep.* 1051E; *Quaest. conv.* 4.4.4–6.669C–672B; *De Is. et Os.* 31.363C–D; *Pomp.* 39.3, 45.1–2, 5; *Cic.* 7.6; *Ant.* 3.1–3, 27.4, 36.3–4, 61.1–3, 71.1, 72.3; *Galba* 13.4; *Oth.* 4.3, 15.6. See Stern (1974: 545–576).

<sup>4</sup> Ben Shalom (2006).

essayist and diplomat Menashe Ben Israel (1604–1657), otherwise also remembered for being the teacher of the philosopher Baruch Spinoza in Amsterdam (1622).<sup>5</sup> First, in his edition of the book of the rabbi, mathematician, philosopher and physician Joseph Shlomo Ben Eliahu (= “Yashar”) Delmedigo (1591–1655), called *Sefer Elim* (*Book of Elim*, Amsterdam 1629),<sup>6</sup> a reference is made (77) to Plutarch’s *Alex.* 7.5–9. Similarly, Ben Israel’s book *Spes Israelis* (1650), translated into Hebrew as *Mikveh Israel* and three times into English (1st edition: 1650, 2nd and 3rd editions: 1651–1652)<sup>7</sup> as *The Hope of Israel*, includes another reference to *Alex.* 26.5–6 (on the island of Pharos).<sup>8</sup> Second, the work *Nishmat Hayim* (*A Breath of Life*, 1651), devoted to the strengthening of the Jewish orthodox belief in the reincarnation of souls,<sup>9</sup> refers (Article III, ch. 20) to the seer warning Caesar (*Caes.* 63.5–6).<sup>10</sup> One should also note the book *The Salvation of Israel* (Latin: *Vindiciae Judaeorum*, Amsterdam 1656), an answer to attacks on Judaism by the lawyer and polemicist William Prynne (London 1656); a noteworthy citation is made in this work of *Per.* 13.12, in that envy/hatred or flattery distort the truth (section 1, art. 17), besides a reference to *On the control of anger* 458B (section III, art. 3).<sup>11</sup>

It would take more than another hundred years before the first translation of one of Plutarch’s treatises would be attempted in Hebrew – namely, the *On*

<sup>5</sup> Roth (1934).

<sup>6</sup> A book on 12 major scientific themes, and 70 minor problems (the section called *Maayan Chatum, Closed Fountain*), written in answer to questions from the Karaite Zerah Ben Nathan of Troki (Lithuania), and including mathematical, physical and astronomical issues. See Barzilay (1974).

<sup>7</sup> Printed by “R.I. for Hannah Allen”; the latter editions included the treatise of the translator, Moses Wall, *Considerations Upon the Point of the Conversion of the Jewes* (1651) as an appendix.

<sup>8</sup> In support of his argument that the descendants of the lost tribes of Israel are to be found in the New World among the native population of South America, and the proposition that there was once a land joining Asia and America (section 39). See Glaser (1973), Méchoulan and Nahon (1987).

<sup>9</sup> Its Latin title was *Libri quattuor de immortalitate animae* (*On the immortality of the soul*).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Suetonius *Div. Jul.* 81.2–4. The work also included a general reference (Article III, ch. 11) to stories from Plutarch, the theologian Martin Delrio (1551–1608) and the sixteenth century figure Simon Mayolo.

<sup>11</sup> See also Ben Israel’s *El Conciliador* (in Spanish, in three parts: 1632, 1641, 1651), aiming to bring Christian intellectuals closer to Judaism, presented alleged discrepancies in the Hebrew Bible and attempted to reconcile them. Plutarch is cited in the work among other ancient authors. The main references are: a close allusion to *Solon* 6 (Question 19 Gen. 2.18); *De cap. ex inim.* 92B (Question 46 Gen. 18:25); *Quaest. conv.* 681C (Question 125 Exodus 30: 12); *De Is. et Os.* 21.359D (Question 4 Jeremiah 10:25); allusion to *De facie* 923A (Question 11 Psalms 24: 1); allusion to *De reg. et imp. Apoph.* 199A; cf. Cic. *Tusc. Disp.* 4.23.52. (Question 1 Ecclesiastes 1: 18).

*the education of children*, the first in the traditional order of the *Moralia* works, partially translated (1–8, 1A–6A), presumably from Italian, and perhaps by Menachem Mendel Lefin (Levin) (1749–1826, the name is missing from the only extant MS).<sup>12</sup> Plutarch was thus not absent from the movement of the Jewish Enlightenment (*Haskala*) from its beginning. This fact corroborates recent studies of the *Haskala*, showing that the Hebraic authors never disregarded classical Greek and Roman literature, contrary to the image that they allegedly turned only to the classical Jewish heritage, as if following the tradition of an antithesis between Judaism and Hellenism.<sup>13</sup> The approach some scholars adopted combined admiration and criticism of the classical world. It is reflected in the espousal by Hebraic satirists of Lucian and his sarcasm directed at Greek culture after its heyday, now adapted in Jewish garb.<sup>14</sup> Plutarch's position as wholly within Greek culture, and yet not beyond moral criticism of some of its manifestations, presumably gave his works a special attractiveness. Besides, the fact that Plutarch was a wide ranging, almost encyclopedic, author who collected and revised previous information also contributed to his appeal.

The first mentions of Plutarch in the Neo-Hebrew *Haskala* are in scholarly notes, or in compendia, lexica and dictionaries, intended to incorporate the widest range of human knowledge possible. For instance, M. Shlesinger, *Stories from China*, in the renewed periodical *Hamaasef (The Collector)*, 8 (15.3.1809, Berlin), 169–174 [172] refers to *Alex.* 64 on Alexander and the Brahmans, in a dialogue that criticised the belief of Alexander and the Greeks.<sup>15</sup> The Book *Shvilei Olam (Routes of the World)* by Shimshon Bloch Halevi (1784–1845), the first modern Geography and Ethnography work in Hebrew, contains a typical reference to Plutarch in its first volume, devoted to Asia (Zhovkva, 1822), 66 note (“India”):

According to the sage Plutarch in his moral books ... the ancients once taught the elephant to dance and kneel.<sup>16</sup>

Another geographical work, *Eretz Kedumim (Ancient Land)* an annotated edition by Y. Kaplan (Vilnius 1839) to Solomon Löwison's *Mechkerei Eretz* (Vienna 1819), explores biblical toponyms. In the entry “Moph” (cf. Hosea 9:6), a reference is made to “Plutarch the Greek sage” who explains the Egyptian Memphis

<sup>12</sup> See Haberman (1951).

<sup>13</sup> See Cohen (2013). Cf. Feiner (1995: 46); Dickman (2004). See also Klausner (1930: 19), Shavit (1992: 46, 48–49, 55), Bartal (2002: 115).

<sup>14</sup> Werses (1990).

<sup>15</sup> On *Hamaasef* see Tsamriyon (1988).

<sup>16</sup> The reference is to *De fortuna* 3.98E.

as “the haven of the good” (reference to *On Isis and Osiris* 20.359B). Plutarch is cited several times in the dictionary of the scholar Isaac Baer Levinsohn (1788–1860), who carried the Jewish Enlightenment ideas to Russia; this dictionary was called *Roots of Lebanon* (Vilnius 1841).<sup>17</sup> See the entry “Love” (*Ahav*, p. 8), differentiating between affection and lust, “as we are taught very briefly by the sage and writer Plutarch”; the entry “Cham” (p. 64, a reference to *On Isis and Osiris* 33.364C);<sup>18</sup> the entry “Molech” (p. 101, allusion to *On Superstition* 171C); the entry “Toreph” (p. 184, reference to *On the obsolescence of oracles* 414E, the ventriloquists called ‘Pythones’); an essay on idolatry (pp. 204–205, reference to *On Isis and Osiris* 45.369D on the universal human belief in dualism). The *Erech Melin*, the unfinished encyclopedia of Rabbi Solomon Judah Löb Hacohen Rapoport (“*Shir*”, 1786–1867), first volume (Prague 1852), mentions (in the entry “Alexander”, pp. 66–98 [71]) Plutarch’s story of Alexander in Amon (*Alex.* 27.5–11) and interestingly, explains (p. 162) the Aramaic word *Istandra* (Talmud, *Gittin* 8ob) by the Greek *astandes*, the title of Darius III before he assumed the throne (*Alex.* 18.4 or *On the fortune and virtue of Alexander the Great* 2.326F), interpreted as ‘bodyguard’. Plutarch would be cited later on in the lexicon *Otzar HaShemot* (*Treasure of Names*), edited by A.H. Rosenberg (New York: Rosenberg Press 1912–23); the entry “Bileam” referring to *Crass.* 16.5, “Egypt” again to *On Isis and Osiris* 33.364C, “Libation” to *Table talk* 4.6.2.671D.<sup>19</sup>

Some of the references are, interestingly, to Plutarch’s depictions of music and sounds. This is the nature of the first reference, made in the journal *Bikurei Haitim* (*First Fruits of the Times*), edited by Shalom Hacohen (1771–1845), Vienna 1823 (pp. 135–136), namely, to *Table talk* 8.3.720C–722F.<sup>20</sup> Another field of interest is astronomy.<sup>21</sup> Some mention Plutarch’s thoughts on education.<sup>22</sup> The appearance of Plutarch in religious discussions of Rabbinic literature is also noteworthy.<sup>23</sup> The Hebrew apology against modern accusations of blood

<sup>17</sup> On Levinsohn see also Shavit (2011: 450–451).

<sup>18</sup> Levinsohn repeated this in a footnote in the work on ancient geography by Schulman (1855: 36).

<sup>19</sup> See also the entry “Biography” in the Encyclopedia of Eisenstein (1909: 3.23).

<sup>20</sup> Other references include: in a book devoted to sermons, Viterbo (1839: 2.43), alludes to *De aud. poet.*; HaCohen Shereshevsky (1869) to *Alex.* 50.9.

<sup>21</sup> See Slonimski (1835: 7–8) referring to Copernicus’ reading of Pseudo-Plutarch’s *Placita philosophorum* 3.11, 13; cf. Slonimski (1862) on *Lys.* 12; Warschawsky (1864: 111) on *De facie* 920–921; Sossnitz (1890: 92) to *De facie* 923A.

<sup>22</sup> See Scheinhaus (1894), Glas (1911), Horowitz (1927: 15).

<sup>23</sup> See Halevi (1863: 444–445), referring to *Sept. sap. conv.* 151B–D; Orshansky (1865) finds in *Crass.* 2 correspondence with Exodus Rabbah 1:10; Dobsewitz (1870: 99) mentions *Alex.* 26.4–8 by way of glossing a passage from the Talmud (*Sukkah* Tractate 51b); Lerner (1915:

libel, Isaac Baer Levinsohn's *Efes Damim* (1837, written 1834)<sup>24</sup> is set as a dialogue between the chief rabbi in Jerusalem ("Maimon") and a patriarch of the Greek Church ("Simmias"). Levinsohn was admittedly influenced by Menashe Ben Israel (above). This influence can also be seen in the inclusion of the latter's citation of Plutarch's *Per. 13.12*, in that hatred or flattery distort the truth.<sup>25</sup> One should note that the number of references in the Neo-Hebrew literature to Plutarch's actual depictions of Jews is surprisingly low.<sup>26</sup> The writings of the period included many other miscellaneous references to various sections of Plutarch's works.<sup>27</sup>

Plutarch is thus singled out as an authority in various fields. This is true during the literature of the *Haskala* as well as in the period of the following movement among Jewish intellectuals, i.e., the *National Revival* (*Hatchiya*, roughly from 1890 onward). Among the great giants of the Jewish *Haskala*, a place of honour should be allotted to the prolific essayist, translator and author Shlomo Rubin (1823–1910), with whom Plutarch was apparently a personal favourite.<sup>28</sup> The Chaeronean appears in many of his works, as the following indicative list may show: in the *Book of Virtues* (Vienna 1854) 27, 60 a reference is made to *Sayings of Spartans* 220C, *Arist.* 6.1; in *The Glory of Judaea and Jerusalem* (Vienna 1870), ch. 3.2. n., *Them.* 26.4 is alluded to; in *The Secret of the Spheres* (Vienna 1873), 58 the allusion is to *On the obsolescence of oracles* 429D; *The Book of Creation* (Vienna 1875) 14 refers to *On the face in the moon* 940C–E; Rubin's *The Praise of Folly* (Vienna 1880), an adaptation of Erasmus' *Moriae Encomium* (1511), aiming to find instances of ridicule against the Enlightenment and men of letters, contains several references to Plutarch;<sup>29</sup> in the paper "Symbols of Animals in the Nation" (*Hamelitz* 11.5.1883) mention is made of *Ant.* 65.3; in the paper "Respect to Animals among the Ancients" (*Hamelitz* 29.10.1883) of *Luc.* 10.1; Plutarch is given special mention in *Riddles of the World* (Krakow 1901) 26 and *Man and Beast, or Cruelty to Animals* (Krakow 1908) 9 as advocating the

<sup>24</sup>) refers to *Lyc.* 18. See also Gavrielov (1925: 65), Horowitz (1926: 40), Friedmann (1927: 12) who refer to Plutarch.

<sup>24</sup> The title is a pun on a toponym (1 Samuel 17:1), which includes the word blood (*Damim*).

<sup>25</sup> Levinsohn (1839: 1.126) notes that Plutarch preceded the similar phrase in the Jewish treatise *Genesis Rabbah* 55:8 ("love impairs common sense"). Asserting that Plutarch preceded the Jewish sages is little short of revolutionary. Cf. Cohen (2013: 360–361).

<sup>26</sup> E.g., Epstein (1883: 175), Abramovitz (1878). Cf. Meisach (1881: 29–31).

<sup>27</sup> Very few examples: Schmilg (1872) alludes to *Alex.* 27, Rakowski (1885) mentions *Caes.* 17.2), Flodirmacher (1890: 145) refers to *Con. praec.* 142C, Shulman (1895) alludes to *Ca. Mi.* 25); Landsberg (1905: 136) refers to *De tuenda* 16.130A–D).

<sup>28</sup> On Rubin see Klausner (1949: 305–318).

<sup>29</sup> Introduction 3, Ch. 2.2, Ch. 10.5, Ch. 11, Section 3.3, Section 8, Ch. 12.1.

ascription of intelligent souls to animals; *On Isis and Osiris* 33.364C is cited in *The Story of the Creation of the World* (Krakow 1905/6), n. xxix.

Plutarch's views on poetry are also cited in scholarly reviews. One instance is the review of the poet, author and translator David Frischmann (1859–1922), reviewing (in *In the Market of Authors and Books*, Warsaw 1885 [in Hebrew]) M.L. Lilienblum, "A Review of All the Poems of Yehuda Leib Gordon" (in A. Halevi Zederbaum (ed.), *Melitz echad mini alef* (*One Messenger out of a Thousand*), St. Petersburg 1884). Well acquainted with classical literature, Frischmann sarcastically claims in his review:

One of the Greek sages (Plutarch) already taught that reading poems was 'wisdom' – is Mr. Lilinblum familiar with this wisdom to read poems? I doubt it!

Another well-known man of letters was the author, translator (in particular of Herzl's *Altneuland* into the Hebrew *Tel Aviv*, 1902), biographer and founder of modern Hebrew journalism Nahum Sokolow (1859–1936).<sup>30</sup> In *Hatzefira* (*The Dawn*), whose editor and publisher he became in 1894, Sokolow stressed the importance of the literary section alongside the critical and so-called opinion journalism. Occasionally, he would insert the name of Plutarch to his own pieces in the journal; for instance:<sup>31</sup>

Plutarch was extremely right; the leadership of a state is a masterpiece of kings. The hewer mines stone and matter, the painter combines colours, and the king has to mine thousands within the nation, within nations, and to combine souls, to erect not merely a statue framework but a living kingdom, to establish it and to support it.

This association was clear to contemporaries, as one obituary of Sokolow made obvious. L. Konig likened Sokolow to the role of a court philosopher and statesman going out to wander in "the king's garden" with "an old book of Plutarch or Ibn Gabirol" under his arm.<sup>32</sup>

One may discern in these descriptions a concern to find the proper relation between the (ancient and modern) Hebraic literature and Plutarch. In a paper entitled "The Period of Year" (*Hatzefira* 16.9.1884), apropos of the persecutions and pogroms of the passing year, Haim Selig Slonimski asserts:

<sup>30</sup> See Sokolow (1975).

<sup>31</sup> Sokolow (1901). Cf. also Sokolow (1902).

<sup>32</sup> Konig (1955). Ibn Gabirol was an eleventh-century Spanish Jewish philosopher and poet.

The Jewish literature need not envy the literature of the Romans and ancient Greeks. The love of country among them was higher and nobler than the patriotism seen among other nations. Moses, Isaiah, David and Jeremiah were poets and historians and warriors and legislators, comparable to the famous heroes described in the works of Plutarch.

Jews were of course not among the protagonists of Plutarch's biographies, and Jewish figures were marginal and insignificant in his *Lives*. The modern era saw a reversal of this phenomenon in two projects. The first was the so-called *New Plutarch*, designed to relate the *Lives of Men and Women of Action*. One of the volumes of this short-lived series was C.R. Conder's *Judas Maccabaeus and the Jewish war of independence* (New York 1879).<sup>33</sup> The second was called the *Jewish Plutarch* (*Jüdischer Plutarch*), meant to be a biographical lexicon of the well-known Jewish men and women across the periods (*Biographisches Lexicon der markantesten Männer und Frauen jüdischer Abkunft, aller Stände, Zeiten u. Länder*) but especially in the Habsburg Empire, where it was edited by Franz Arnold Gräffer (1785–1852) and Simon Deutsch (1822–77) and published (2 parts in one volume, Vienna 1848).

Another stage in the Neo-Hebrew literature (the *Hatchiya*, see above) is conventionally thought to have begun with the poetry of Hayim Nahman Bialik (1873–1934) and Shaul Tchernichovsky (1875–1943).<sup>34</sup> References to the classical tradition were significant in the works of the latter, who not only wrote his influential poem *In Front of the Statue of Apollo* (Odessa-Heidelberg 1899), containing ostensible assertions of Hellenic paganism, but also completed a full translation of Homeric poetry.<sup>35</sup> Tchernichovsky was also well acquainted with the works of Plutarch, as his annotated *Oedipus Rex* (Berlin 1929) makes clear.<sup>36</sup> Some other writers continued to find interest in Plutarch's stories as a source of topics for essays. One such instance is the author Bar Tovia, pseudonym of S. Fayvl Frenkel (1875–1933), "Athens" (1923; published posthumously, in *Selected Writings*, Tel Aviv 1964), on Pericles' Aspasia (~ *Plu. Per.* 24, 32) and on the destruction of monsters by Greek heroes (~ *Thes.* 6.4). Although the present chapter is devoted to the appearances of Plutarch in Hebrew literature,

<sup>33</sup> Conder carried out survey work in Palestine (1872–4), and again as part of the *Palestine Exploration Fund* (1875–1878, 1881–1882).

<sup>34</sup> See Barzel (1987: 1.23).

<sup>35</sup> *Iliad*: St. Petersburg [Petrograd], Berdiansk, Odessa, Berlin, 1917–1923, published Berlin, Tel Aviv: Stiebel, 1930, 1934; *Odyssey*: trans. 1921–1922, Odessa, published Tel Aviv: Schoken, 1942. See Shanan (1962: 266–279), Benshalon (1966), Dickman (1994). On Tchernichovsky see Klausner (1976), Shanan (1984). See also Flantz (1975).

<sup>36</sup> See n. xiii in his translation (referring to *Caes.* 32.9; cf. Sueton. *Div. Iul.* 7.2). Cf. Tchernichovsky (1945), which may betray some influence of Plutarch's *De aud. poet.*

mention should also be made of the first known literary Jewish composition dedicated to Plutarch, which is the short story in Yiddish "Plutarch" by the essayist and writer Yekhiel Yeshaye Trunk (1887–1961), written in Vilnius 1940, after he fled Warsaw and before his arrival in New York (1941).<sup>37</sup>

There were some in the Neo-Hebrew literature who found fault with Plutarch's *Lives*. The type of biographies written by Plutarch is consistently rejected as irrelevant to the Jewish people by Abba Ahimeir (1897–1962), one of the important ideologues of right-winged Revisionist Zionism. In an article dealing with Emil Ludwig's popular biography *Wilhelm der Zweite* (Berlin 1925), Ahimeir condemns this type of biography in his wish to expose the heroes as mundane figures:

One thing Humanity lacks: great men. But in order for great men to appear we first need the belief in the very possibility of the existence of great men to be restored. In a sated human society, which does not seek to consolidate its position under the sun, it is permissible to mock the belief in great men. It is no wonder that in America, England, France and now in Germany the AntiCarlylian literature breeds and multiplies.<sup>38</sup> Exactly like in Greece and Rome of the second century, when Plutarch wrote of the historical *personae* ... but in a society which is in a state of struggle for existence there is no place for this "Heretic" literature. For us Jews, this Emil Ludwigian literature is dangerous ... it is not Emil Ludwig, neither Plutarch ... we need, but Carlylian literature.<sup>39</sup>

Ahimeir repeats these ideas apropos of the suicide of Stefan Zweig, where he compares the interest in biographical writing in interwar European democratic countries to the ancient biographic literature, blooming with Plutarch, at the time when Hellenic civilisation was already past its prime. Ahimeir concludes: "an original culture has no need for biographies".<sup>40</sup>

Yet the establishment of the state of Israel did not see the disappearance of Plutarch from literary discussions or concerns. On the contrary, mentions of Plutarch were now given official frameworks. A series of meetings conducted at the behest of David Ben Gurion (1866–1973), the Israeli Prime Minister

<sup>37</sup> Originally published in Prilutzky, Trunk and Rabon (1940). It was eventually published in Trunk (1958). See also Shapira (1991). On Trunk see Fuks (1961), Pat (1954: 114–129), Roskies (1995: 312–318).

<sup>38</sup> A reference to Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), whose approach is best summarised by the dictum "The History of the world is but the Biography of great men" in Carlyle (1841: 47, cf. 1, 18).

<sup>39</sup> Ahimeir (1929).

<sup>40</sup> Ahimeir (1942).

(1948–1954, 1955–1963), together with prominent academics including the philosopher and scholar Martin Buber (1878–1965), the poet Shimon Helkin (1899–1987), and the physicist Shmuel Sambursky (1900–1990) aimed to prepare a series of literary masterpieces to be translated into Hebrew. During these discussions the name of Plutarch was mentioned by Ben Gurion himself.<sup>41</sup> In fact, several translations of Plutarch's *Lives* into Hebrew existed by then or were already underway. The first translation<sup>42</sup> was made by Y.L. Baruch and included two volumes.<sup>43</sup> One flaw of this translation, apart from its arbitrary selection and presentation of few *Lives*, was that it was incomplete, omitting items "that were of offence in terms of our morals, or were irrelevant".<sup>44</sup> A second attempt (1953) was made by a team of translators and was also published in two volumes, split now into the *Men of Greece* and *Men of Rome*.<sup>45</sup> This translation was again incomplete, was not made from the original Greek, lacked an introduction and was not annotated.<sup>46</sup> Mention should be made of a third attempt, the inclusion of several passages in an anthology, whose first part was devoted to Ancient Israel and ancient nations (alongside Demosthenes and Josephus).<sup>47</sup>

It was only with the fourth attempt (1954) that Plutarch's *Lives* received their most elaborate translation. This was done by the Classicist and Vice President of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (1961–1964) Joseph G. Liebes (1910–1988), and followed the split of the second translation into a notional volume on Roman *Lives* and one on Greek *Lives*. Liebes only managed to prepare the

<sup>41</sup> Naor (2011). The series of meetings was held from 1958 to 1962. Ben Gurion viewed translations of Plutarch as surpassing the original Greek in terms of accessibility (at the meeting of 23.2.1958). Plutarch was eventually not included in this project.

<sup>42</sup> Certain passages were previously translated, but sporadically. For instance, *Sol.* 29 by Kabak (1914).

<sup>43</sup> The first included *Theseus*, *Lycurgus*, *Solon*, *Themistocles*, the second *Aristides*, *Cimon*, *Pericles*, *Nicias* (Tel Aviv, 1932). The publishing house "Omanut" announced the publication of *Alexander* later (*Davar*, 13.12.1946). See the obituary to Y.L. Baruch (in *Maariv*, 13.11.1953).

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Sambation (1954a).

<sup>45</sup> Ornstein et al. (1953). *Great Men of Greece: Theseus, Lycurgus, Solon, Themistocles, Pericles, Alcibiades, Alexander, Demosthenes*, translated by S. Shmuelovitz and Y. Ornstein. *Men of Rome: Romulus, Coriolanus, Pompey, Caesar, Cicero, Antony*, translated by G. Nadel, S. Shmuelovitz, Y. Ornstein, and I. Achidov (Eldad), Y. Chrust.

<sup>46</sup> On several misunderstandings in these translations see Sambation (1954a) who claims it is full of Hebraic "barbarisms". Alluding to Plu. *Cic.* 27.4 (when Cicero met Voconius escorting three very ugly daughters, he cried out: "it was against the will of Phoebus that he begat children"), Sambation exclaimed: "it was against Phoebus that they translated Plutarch".

<sup>47</sup> See Perski and Avivi (1954). See the criticism of Zemora (1955).

translation of the first volume, and even this one was not completed.<sup>48</sup> From the introduction to the volume, which may have influenced the artistic image of Plutarch in Israeli literature (below), one may sense that Liebes identified with the Chaeronean:<sup>49</sup>

... but permanent residence he had in his small Boeotian hometown; he did not choose, like other Greek intellectuals, to serve as a clerk in the Empire, or to be a teacher of philosophy or rhetoric in one of the schools, but remained loyal to his homeland, was satisfied with its honours and fulfilled its duties with devotion ... and this is how he wrote his numerous books ... No political aim distorted his vision, and his entire thought was only to show how in these figures precious virtues assumed form, the virtues that any self-respecting person is commanded to maintain at any time, and that the act of observing them is the foundation to any meaningful education. Since Plutarch was a teacher by nature, he tried to instill in his readers the affection he had for his heroes, for education intends to bring the person into action, which is not possible without the element that brings to life any great deed – love ...

Liebes ends his introduction with the assertion that “as long as the cultural European chain would not break, this book will not be removed from the readership of this culture”. The chain was indeed not broken. Despite many criticisms voiced against this translation,<sup>50</sup> it was continued by the scholar and translator Elimelech E. Halevi (1901–1983),<sup>51</sup> in two separate volumes: one on most Greek *Lives* (1971) and another including the *Lives* not covered by the first two together with the *Comparisons* (1973).<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Liebes (1954) includes *Coriolanus*, *Fabius Maximus*, *Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus*, *Cato Major*, *Marius*, *Sulla*, *Sertorius*, *Lucullus*, *Pompey*, *Crassus*, *Cicero*, *Caesar*, *Cato Minor*, *Brutus*, *Antony*.

<sup>49</sup> See the note of his son, Liebes (2001: 52, n. 10).

<sup>50</sup> See Sambation (1954b) on the lack of a real introduction, Liebes’ selectivity and the unPlutarchan structure. On the criticism of an accurate, but unpleasant rendering into Hebrew see Ungerfeld (1954).

<sup>51</sup> Halevi was a scholar of the Jewish Aggadah (the stories included in the rabbinic literature), and referred to Plutarch also in his great work, the *Gates of the Aggadah* (Tel Aviv, 1963) 34, 45, 54 (in Hebrew). Halevi also translated Thucydides (Jerusalem, 1959) and Xenophon’s *Anabasis* (Jerusalem, 1969).

<sup>52</sup> Halevi and Ben Shamai (1971) includes only 17 biographies. The biographies of Solon, Themistocles and Alcibiades were translated and annotated by M.H. Ben Shamai. The rest of the *Lives* appeared in the third volume, Halevi (1973a), which included the mythical heroes and the Persian Artaxerxes – barely fitting the title *Greek and Roman Men*. See

Plutarch also made appearances in Israeli newspapers. Some of the articles refer to Jewish contexts.<sup>53</sup> The biographer is the favourite of some of the columnists and publicists in Israeli journalism.<sup>54</sup> Some contexts of the references to Plutarch are especially relevant to the Israeli experience;<sup>55</sup> in this category one may include letters to the newspapers' editorial boards.<sup>56</sup>

Moreover, Plutarch and his work were employed in certain political debates and by politicians in several situations in Israel. A few examples will suffice. Menachem Begin (1913–1992), of the same Revisionist school as Ahimeir and of the right-wing party *Cherut* (and later Prime Minister, 1977–1983), found it useful to cite Plutarch, and had a favourite quote, which he employed on at least three occasions, one of them in the Israeli Parliament (Knesset), this being the first time Plutarch's name was uttered there.<sup>57</sup> On the other side of the political spectrum, Y. Guthalf, in his column (in *Davar*), imagined Solon's retort (*Sol.* 15.2) as relevant to the leader Ben Gurion, under attack from all political parties.<sup>58</sup> Well versed in his Plutarch, Prime Minister Ben Gurion quoted the story of Aristides' ostracism (*Arist.* 7) during a meeting with the archaeologist

the criticism of Freund (1971) on the lack of the *Comparisons* and of several *Lives*. Halevi (1971) agreed with this criticism in his response. Halevi (1973b) published one *Comparison* (*Demosthenes-Cicero*). Ben Shamai (1964) translated six brief sections from the *Moralia*.

53 E.g., Klausner (1944) on Plutarch's treatment of the feast of Tabernacles; Yambur (1952) on Alexander's aim in the Marriages at Susa as opposed to the Jewish resistance to accept the Hellenistic Culture); Tzur (1970) refers to Plutarch's *Artaxerxes* as relevant to the book of Esther.

54 See Bosak (1956) on the influence of ancient Israelite culture in Europe, e.g., on the Romans, quoting *Rom.* 6.1 (Gabii) as having connection with *Givea*, Heb. "hill". See Bosak (1966) on *Sert.* 1.4. See Sela (1976a) on Plutarch's Alexander encounter with Iraqi oil (*Alex.* 35), apropos of the word *Naphta/Nepht*, (1976b) on the phrase "the mountain gave birth to a mouse" in *Ages.* 35.5, (1976c) on the phrase *Silent leges inter arma* (Plu. *Cic.* 35.5 and *Cic. Pro Mil.* 4.11). See Steinmann (1956) on *Per.* 2, (1962) on the jesting of soldiers during the Roman Triumph, *Aem.* 34.7. See Landers (1968) on the assassination of Caesar.

55 See Benjamin (1970) with allusion to Plu. *Alex.* 71.8 (cf. *Arr. Anab.* 7.12). See Guthalf (1967) against the temptation of the Israelis to be a nation who lives by the sword like the Spartans, neglecting arts and sciences, with an allusion to *Lyc.* 16.6.

56 E.g., Sepharadi (1965).

57 It is actually an incorrect reference: "Plutarch's story of three emperors in Rome and their relation to the Senate's decisions": one Emperor followed all of the Senate's resolutions, another only those decisions that he proposed, the third discarded all of the Senate's decisions, even those he himself proposed. This appeared in Begin's attack on the Government's lenient policy with regard to the Arab refugees (Knesset, 2.12.1963), against the UN attempts to negotiate between Israel and Egypt (*Maariv* 5.2.1971) and again in the Knesset (16.6.1971).

58 Guthalf (1956).

Pesach Bar-Adon concerning the excavations in Nachal Mishmar.<sup>59</sup> Ben Gurion's longtime associate and follower, Shimon Peres (1923–2016), of the Mapai/Labour Party (and later Prime Minister, 1984–6, 1995–6 and President, 2007–14), was unflatteringly compared to Plutarch's Phocion (*Phoc.* 8.3) in the same newspaper.<sup>60</sup> Peres himself is said to have quoted Plutarch in a gathering in memory of Ben Gurion.<sup>61</sup> Shevah Weiss (b. 1935), of the Labour Party and later Speaker of the Knesset (1992–1996), referred to Plutarch in the Parliament on the occasion of the Labour's own proposal to dissolve the Knesset (24.11.1982).<sup>62</sup> Allusions to Plutarch in political contexts have continued to the present Israeli generation.<sup>63</sup>

Commenting on the habit of politicians to quote men of letters, the author Yoram Kanyuk (1930–2013) referred to Plutarch's own description that the Spartan leaders would pray to the Muses (*Lyc.* 21).<sup>64</sup> The author Pinchas Sadeh (1929–1994) would deplore this public citation of art, and instead would have an artist cite political public events in order to fathom the true meaning of the world. To exemplify this truism, he referred to Plutarch's mention of the Roman massacre of the Germans (*Mar.* 26–27).<sup>65</sup> An appreciation of Plutarch's work as art was never absent even from scientific treatments in Israel, but rather emphasised, perhaps in correspondence with this author's peculiar position.<sup>66</sup>

## II

The three poems dealt with here all bear witness to the relevance Plutarch has for the Israeli experience. They shed light on the receiving context in Israeli society as much as they inform us about Plutarch himself. As far as is known, the

59 Ed (1961).

60 Baruch (1959).

61 Avrech (1974).

62 Weiss referred to *Lyc.* 21 (cf. *Apophth. Lac.* 238A–B). He concluded by saying that the Israeli democracy should be more like the Athenian example (Pericles' *epitaphios*, Thuc. 2.40), lest it deteriorate to the Spartan practice and form of government.

63 For instance, Prof. Nimrod Aloni (b. 1956) supporter of the Humanistic public schools in Israel, quotes Plutarch (presumably, *Demetr.* 1.3) on the obligation for self-improvement. See Aloni (2006 [1998]: 163). Conversely, referring to Plutarch's *Cato Minor*, the editorial paper of the right-wing journal *Azur: Ideas for the Jewish Nation* (in Hebrew) advocates freedom, decentralisation and public morality as opposed to an authoritarian, charismatic and populist way at the expense of the existing laws. See Sagiv (2006).

64 Kanyuk (1986: 32).

65 In an interview held in June 1970 and published in Ben Ezer (1974).

66 See Geiger (1979).

first work ever to have Plutarch's name in modern Hebrew literature is a poem by the poet, translator, writer and Israeli Prize laureate Meir Wieseltier (b. 1941, Moscow).<sup>67</sup> The Plutarch who appears in Wieseltier's poem still preserves his marginal position in his own society:

*Rereading Plutarch/ Meir Wieseltier (1966)*

Plutarch was a kibbutznik.<sup>68</sup>  
 He sat in the agricultural farm in Delphi.  
 In his room was a bookcase of works he laboriously collected  
 one by two metres,  
 and a plant, and a reproduction of Picasso.  
 He read extensively  
 books written at the end of the last century.  
 He was impressed by the greatness and smallness of the lives of  
 individuals  
 who acted their deeds in the great and distant cities.  
 All the famous people were arranged on his shelves.  
 For their sake he was amazingly diligent in silence all through his nights  
 and in their light he walked about  
 daily, in his measured steps  
 between the temple, the common dining room and the clothes  
 warehouse.

The poem seems to operate on three levels, maintaining all the following possibilities as co-existing side by side: one is an Israeli allegory applicable to the ancient Plutarch; the second is the notion of the famous Plutarch as an allegory applicable to this particular type of Israeli member of the Kibbutz; the third is viewing this particular person as a man caught up in his own fantasy, wishing to emulate the Boeotian of old.<sup>69</sup>

The Israeli context in the poem is placed at a juncture of three worlds: (1) the old, religious one, (2) the new socialist, working ideal, and (3) the new national, secular community, in which the communal society of the

67 In Wieseltier (1969). On Wieseltier see Hirsch and Pfefferkorn (1973), Ramras-Rauch (1986: 232), Yaniv (1989), Butt (2012: 33–37). This poem is mentioned in Laor (2017).

68 = A Kibbutz member, with the Russian suffix “-nik” to associate a person with a thing, a quality, an action or a place, adopted in the Israeli language.

69 The co-existence of these possibilities, as the dual life of this “Plutarch” (his days are devoted to work, while his nights are dedicated to learning) is close to the scheme of parallel *Lives* (i.e., Greek besides Roman) and parallel worlds. Cf. Almagor (2016).

Kibbutz fits.<sup>70</sup> There are ironic references to religious concepts that have undergone secularisation in the Kibbutz (“bookcase”,<sup>71</sup> “temple”). The books on the shelves introduce another world, the wider universe outside of Israel, hinting at a longing for the worldly, non-Jewish, culture. This “Plutarch” is limited in terms of time and space, confined to a small place, where nothing seems to change. His own room is small, as opposed to the great, distant cities his books describe. He connects to the outer, wider world through his reading. The first section beautifully shows this contradiction. While there is a descending narrowing spatial perspective (Kibbutznik – agricultural farm – room – bookcase), there is a reverse ascending widening perspective in terms of content (from this small place to the outer nature/ world). This contradiction implies a complex character, wherein the modest measures of the bookcase and his life are offset by the ambition and pretentiousness of the current “Plutarch” to include “all the famous people”. The portrayal echoes the beginning of *Demosthenes* (2.2).<sup>72</sup> Although this “Plutarch” is impressed by the greatness of his heroes, he is also captured by their smallness (presumably the petty anecdotes which often display their petty characters), thereby limiting himself again. Indeed, the description at the end is iterative.<sup>73</sup>

The place is small and secluded, and distant from external reality or nature through prisms and screens. The plant is artificial nature, and the reproduction introduces the notion of a copy of art.<sup>74</sup> All these depictions seemingly echo a Platonic framework, most particularly the Platonic cave parable (*Resp.* 7.514a–517e), where people live by images and do not perceive the real life. That this interpretation is suggested can be seen in the fact that “Plutarch” walks in the light of books and not in the light of the sun; he is still within the cave, as it were.

The idea of reproduction has another meaning pertinent to the idea of the Kibbutz: it assumes the appropriation of one solitary item and making it accessible for many to share. This is exactly what Plutarch the ancient appears to have done, by making private lives of real people available and common to

<sup>70</sup> On the Israeli Kibbutz, a collective community initially based on agriculture, the sharing of property and complete egalitarianism, leading to communal raising of children, see Spiro (1956), Near (1992; 1997).

<sup>71</sup> This word would immediately evoke the notion of the “Jewish bookcase”. Its measurements resonate the measures of the sacred ark of the covenant (*Exodus* 25:10), both called in Hebrew *Aron*.

<sup>72</sup> See Zadorojnyi (2006).

<sup>73</sup> Thus, even what appears as his breakthrough (via his readings, and alluded to by the transition from “sitting” at the beginning to “walking” at the end) is in fact illusory and limited.

<sup>74</sup> See Plato on art as imitation of an imitation, removed twice from reality: *Rep.* 10.596a–598b. See Tate (1932), Cherniss (1932), Golden (1975), Moss (2007).

many readers. In this sense, Plutarch was indeed a Kibbutznik.<sup>75</sup> Yet, there is no evidence for the existence of other people; they are only referred to by location ("common dining room"). Note that the books this "Plutarch" holds "were written", with no author indicated by name. Only the reader is known.<sup>76</sup> The poem insinuates that the Kibbutz idea, taken *ad absurdum*, allows no individualism and of necessity leads to a faceless society. This is thus the point where the ideas of biography and the Kibbutz meet: taken to their extremes, both largely involve the portrayal of people as a faceless mass.

The poem's "Plutarch", however, also challenges both Plutarch of old and the very idea of the Kibbutz. Firstly, he takes books, common to all, and makes them his own private property. Thus, this "Plutarch" seizes what the real Plutarch wrote and makes it inaccessible again. The room of this "Plutarch" within the Kibbutz and his learning activity at night are tantamount to an attempt to preserve privacy and individualism in a place whose ideology is to assume communality and public sharing. His nights are silent and lonely, as opposed to the common dining room, and while he reads the books all by himself, the clothes warehouse denotes communal sharing.<sup>77</sup> This individualism is seen throughout the poem. It speaks of one person; the first section begins with the name of a private person (Plutarch) and ends with another (Picasso). The following part dissolves the communal way of life to its components, as is reflected by the transition from a bookcase to its "shelves". It ends with measured steps, as if every step has its individuality.<sup>78</sup>

Furthermore, this "Plutarch" is not productive, and therefore undermines his ancient counterpart and the idea of the Kibbutz; he is only a consumer,<sup>79</sup> who collects for his own personal need. In contradiction to the image of the ancient Plutarch, who "wrote a lot" (*Suda*, s.v. "Plutarchos", π 1793 Adler), the

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<sup>75</sup> Metapoetically, the application of the figure of Plutarch on this Kibbutznik by way of an allegory is in itself a form of sharing or making public.

<sup>76</sup> Similarly, heroes are said to have acted in the "cities", without mention of their effects on people. "Plutarch" is impressed by both the greatness and smallness of his protagonists alike, as if applying the Kibbutz idea of equality to its extremes.

<sup>77</sup> As "Plutarch" is subversively challenging the Kibbutz as an Israeli creation, it is no wonder that the foreign name of the Greek figure is stressed.

<sup>78</sup> The clothes warehouse may even ostensibly imply individuality, as the clothes are measured by different persons.

<sup>79</sup> He consumes without producing, to paraphrase Orwell (1945: 9), *thus* reflecting Karl Marx's theory of surplus-value (see Disckstein, 2007: 142).

current one "read a lot".<sup>80</sup> His "temple" is actually for his own sake, not for the worship of others.<sup>81</sup>

The very idea of the Kibbutz seems to contradict the notion of biography: the communal idea does not tolerate the presentation of a "great" individual changing the course of history, since every person is like any other, and their power is equal. The assumption that some persons' lives are to be preferred as subject matter of biographies at the expense of others challenges the notion of equality at the basis of the way of life of the Kibbutz. Now, this "Plutarch" creates his literary canon, by a process of selection and choice, whose criterion for his selection is the reputed fame of the persons (famous "people").

The reader of the poem is surely perplexed by the opposition between the virtual famous "people" who are made to appear real, and the real society outside which is non-existent. While this might lead the reader to deduce that the idea of the Kibbutz is no longer relevant and outdated, the reverse interpretation is also possible. There is a hint that the idea of the Kibbutz prevails. The poem begins with "Plutarch" but ends with the common warehouse, as if indicating that the communal idea is stronger. Furthermore, "Plutarch" reads books for the books' sake, as if they were persons. Besides being an echo of the communal idea of living for the sake of others, it also contradicts Plutarch's beginning of the *Aemilius Paulus* (1.1), in which he claims to have begun writing for others and ended up as writing for his own benefit.<sup>82</sup> The current "Plutarch" would never admit such individuality.<sup>83</sup>

The poem functions as a biography of this fictional man of letters. Years later,<sup>84</sup> Wieseltier admitted that this poem was based on the real figure of Joseph Haefrati (b. Gurfinkel, 1931–1974), later head of the Department for Literature in Tel Aviv University (1971–1974). Haefrati eventually left the world of the Kibbutz to pursue a successful academic life in the big city. His brief career was tragically cut short when Haefrati was killed by a Syrian shell on the Golan Heights.

<sup>80</sup> The point is also seen by the ironic phrase "laboriously" and the verb "impressed", which in Hebrew is reflexive ("hitpael"), i.e., he only acts on himself.

<sup>81</sup> In fact, there is a conflation of worlds here: when this "Plutarch" works in daylight (allegedly gives or produces), he appears to be receiving (from the books he reads), and when he reads at night (allegedly consuming), he seems to himself to be giving, "for their sake".

<sup>82</sup> See Duff (1999: 30–31).

<sup>83</sup> Yet, there is something common to both Plutarchs: they took stories which were not initially their own and made them exclusively associated with them. Again, metapoetically, like this "Plutarch" turned books into private persons, Wieseltier transformed the name of Plutarch from a literary text into a real person.

<sup>84</sup> See Bekker (2009).

Both these aspects, the urban environment as well as the reality of war are conspicuously missing from Wieseltier's poem. They appear, however, in the second poem to bear Plutarch's name, written by the poet, translator and literary critic Joseph Sharon (b. 1952, Ramat Gan),<sup>85</sup> and published in *Haaretz* (29.9.2000):

*A Cursory Reading of Plutarch/ Joseph Sharon (2000)*

Demetrius was defeated by Pyrrhus  
 but Lysimachus claimed that Demetrius' eradication was done  
 by both of them, hence Lysimachus made a claim to share with Pyrrhus  
 the whole of Macedonia.  
 This division was short-lived,  
 Since the hostility survived.

Smoke arises from the chimney of Reading and one does not see flames.  
 Night falls.

Dazzling sun,  
 People in cars close to the steering wheel,  
 No wasp will escape her predecessors, trapped it stands in time.

War and peace, says Plutarch,  
 are like a coin, which adversaries use according to their benefit.  
 There will always be those who are unable to suffer but war.  
 In times of peace,  
 he is immediately haunted by the "nauseating boredom",  
 and he is one of those who long for the battle whimper.

In the yard, people left to sit up late  
 without movement in the trees, in great darkness,  
 another compassionate night.  
 Somewhere in the chronicles of time distant are  
 the traitor who had fallen asleep, the betrayed who stays awake,  
 families whose front door has been shut on them. And what page have I  
 reached already?  
 Who will lead us to see what will be left after us?

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85 See Bernstein (1985/1986), Kalderon (1988), Weichert (1994).

The anger of people, alliances, betrayals, horses and the crossing of rivers,  
 That delicate horror  
 not to distinguish any more between them: only to report.  
 A dog barks at the scents of summer.

One does not hear the growth of the leaf, the garage door opening.  
 Empty, sleepy pavements.  
 A long queue, like the flash of memory, at the station of bus number 5.  
 It is not morning yet.

A neighbour across the street turned off his lights, from a funny, brave distance, to my window.  
 We are both similar, flying fish to the fifth floor.  
 One can see clearly in the shadows and it is all like a dream.  
 Then I myself remove my reading glasses, and place them aside.

It would appear that this poem addresses several levels of reality: the past events, their account and the reading of these descriptions in a modern, alienated urban environment (of Tel Aviv). It would seem that Sharon addresses the act of reading Plutarch (presented from the first person perspective) more markedly than Wieseltier, and does not resign himself to the portrayal of Plutarch (or “Plutarch”) interpreting or reading the events of the past. Two vectors are seen to operate in this act of reading, associated with the dimensions of time and space. Past accomplishments seem to dissolve with time. Such is the deed of the sharing of Macedonia by Pyrrhus and Lysimachus, which was “short-lived”. The sharing of these facts (by Plutarch, in the *Life of Pyrrhus* 11–12) with the readers is also dependent on temporal factors (the time it takes to read), and can be easily interrupted.

Sharing past deeds permits a virtual memory: Demetrius is remembered and his name is mentioned at the outset of the poem. On the other hand, everything connected to what Pyrrhus and Lysimachus did, or to what Demetrius suffered, did not last.<sup>86</sup> It is exactly like the smoke of the chimney that survives a non-existent fire. The only thing that “survived”, we are told, is the personal and private hostility between Pyrrhus and Lysimachus.<sup>87</sup> To this fact we should

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Aristotle's definition of history as opposed to poetry (*Poetics*, 1451b1–8). The Pyrrhus allusion evokes a real loss despite an apparent achievement (*Pyrrh.* 21.9).

<sup>87</sup> Following the same example, one should notice that the chimney has a personal name. Reading chimney is part of the Reading electric power plant (built 1937/1938), named

add another personal act that seemingly survives the vicissitudes of time, and this is the personal, individual (yet cursory) reading of this account.<sup>88</sup> In contradiction to Wieseltier's "Plutarch", time is not iterative and communal; it progresses and brings about loss, from which the individual dimension is spared. This is one presumable significance of the allusion to Plutarch, the biographer of individuals; the central figures of the poem are Demetrius/Pyrrhus/Lysimachus the persons, Plutarch the author and the "I" of the reader.

The fleetingness of time is seen throughout the poem.<sup>89</sup> Sharon employs a spatial image to convey this notion of the irreversible progression of time, and this is that of people seated in their cars, close to the steering wheel. The immediate following image of a wasp explicitly mentions that it is "trapped", and "stands in time", although the use of an insect imagery might lead one to think of time as flying.<sup>90</sup> Like the deeds of the past which leave traces in the pages of "the chronicles", and the memory of the traitor and the betrayed, so are the spatial images of people left to sit up late in the trees, or the reader who "reaches" a page of text. The feeling is of a situation, where a direction exists, but without a leader or directing hand.<sup>91</sup>

Roughly midway through the poem the name of Plutarch appears. His protagonists are seen to make war and peace interchangeable; what matters is the private benefit of these persons. Yet, Plutarch appears to resemble his heroes, if he is the one of those "who long for the battle whimper".<sup>92</sup> Plutarch's own moralistic position is thus marred by his very interest in war. The two fleeting moments of war and peace are introduced in the first stanza; the wars Plutarch

in the honour of Rufus Daniel Isaacs, 1st Marquess of Reading (1860–1935), Viceroy of India (1921–1925) and Lord Chief Justice of England, who was a founding chairman of the Palestine Electric Corporation during the British Mandate.

<sup>88</sup> Most significant is the fact that the name of the chimney is *Reading*, presumably a deliberate pun.

<sup>89</sup> The rapid transition from "night falls" to "dazzling sun" and again to the "darkness" and "night" indicate that time elapsed since the beginning of the poem. Similarly, at the end it moves from "it is not morning yet" to "turned off his lights" (i.e. night time). Time passes faster than the act of reading the biography, but the act of reading is slower than the historical events depicted.

<sup>90</sup> Presumably, this is a tongue in cheek reference to the *Vespa* motorcycle, so common in Tel Aviv. Later on, this image is answered by that of a flying fish, applying a temporal image on space.

<sup>91</sup> It is no wonder that here the biblical personal adjective "compassionate" (*erech apaim*) is transposed from a personal God (Exodus 34:6) to an impersonal time of the day ("night"). The "traitor" alluded to here may be time itself.

<sup>92</sup> Indeed, the latter seems much more interesting than the quiet times of peace, and the readers are silent accomplices of this feeling.

describes are temporary, as is our interest in them. The moments are so brief that occurrences introduced in the next stanzas betray aspects of peace. The transition between the two moments is presented spatially, through the image of a coin which can be flipped from one side to the other (cf. *Pyrrh.* 12.3).

This image introduces the second vector, that of symmetrical, divisible space, portrayed most prominently in the image of the text. The textual-spatial dimension enables the separation of the references to Plutarch's works in the poem to distinct, non-sequential stanzas (the first and fourth), and enables a notional halting place for the reading (like the bus stop). Capturing the traces of past deeds in a spatial-textual form, however, diminishes all moral significance in the description, while flattening their uniqueness.<sup>93</sup> Developments are not sensed in the text, as everything is made to resemble everything else; no one can hear the growth of the leaf, or of a garage door opening.

Conversely, the dimension of time adds renewal, or a sense of development, so lacking in the text but existing outside of it. A dog senses a development, in the passage of time to summer, shown as a new arrival, and not a residue of the past.<sup>94</sup> Time, however, also carries loss. The flash of memory is solitary and out of sequence, unlike the queue it is likened to. Something is lost when the sequence of reality becomes but a detached flash of memory.

The poem begins with ancient Pyrrhus and Lysimachus and ends with the modern "I" and his neighbour. The alienation and spatial distance between the latter two is presented as abiding as much as the hostility referred to at the beginning. Sharon's poem is able to depict the act of reading, and the manner space (or text) is capable of capturing time, exactly like Plutarch was able to summarise the acts of the historical agents. While the first stanza leaves the impression that temporal developments cannot change space (note the "short lived" division of Macedonia), when we reach the end of the poem, this is not so clear, as at least one act (that of reading) does leave its imprint on space. The individual "I" removes his reading glasses and places them aside. This placement generates a spatial distance, and presents the reading process as creating remoteness.<sup>95</sup>

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93 The text only reports; it makes no difference between "alliances" or "betrayals", or between what comes earlier or later.

94 The dog in the urban environment is alive, as opposed to the described and tamed horses, which are as dead as the river they allegedly cross.

95 Between the reader and his actual world, between the text and the actual events it describes, and between the content and its moral significance and relevance. This feature comes against the background of blurred differentiation between prose and poetry, the concrete and the abstract; see Hever (2004).

As if ironically proving Sharon's claim of the fleetingness of peace and war times, his own poem was published on the very day the violent clashes known as the "Second Intifada" began. The third poem, by the poet and lecturer Yochai Oppenheimer (b. 1958, Jerusalem),<sup>96</sup> and the last literary work relating to Plutarch in modern Hebrew literature so far (published in *Haaretz*, 9.4.2003) makes the reality of war its main theme. It is a political, anti-war poem, which employs the variance between the moral stance displayed by Plutarch and his historical interests:

*Plutarch*/ Yochai Oppenheimer (2003)

A poem I will write on soldiers:  
 the frivolity that devastated a city  
 plowed through its streets, sent a rookie  
 to befoul its libations.  
 I will complete Livy, Tacitus  
 in a poem about emperors, who have cast their patronage over  
 other celestial bodies.

I will give open spaces to my brow, not density, lameness, accident.  
 I will need a chain of paper for  
 that darkness, disregard of all that has arisen  
 above dust: where they felt emotions, or missed a beat,  
 or came out strongly against, fathers  
 and husbands who preferred to complete a life  
 without knowing weakness, to save –  
 but a luxury.

Rhyme them immortality  
 instead of old age,  
 I will not,  
 and pour a bit of their blood into the ink, teach  
 that tyranny is a slave to logic and nests inside it  
 and how many souls they had  
 that were run over by the wheel of deeds.  
 I will listen to the mouth that has raised heirs,  
 to the eye that was shut as a stranger.

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96 See Oppenheimer (2006). Cf. Hollander (2002), Oz (2006).

This poem involves the act of writing, and does not mention reading. Oppenheimer places Plutarch only in the title, as if external and distant from everything that goes on in the poem. This enables him to take to the extremes the variance between Plutarch's moral position and his interest in biographical writing. It also allows Oppenheimer to play between several meanings. One reading is to envisage the lyrical "I" to be a moralist Plutarch who is writing against the glorification of commanders as opposed to his interest in the common soldiery; this places the moralist Plutarch against Plutarch the biographer.

The narrator seemingly promises an anti-heroic composition.<sup>97</sup> This poet will sing instead of soldiers (in the plural) and of the devastation of a city as something not heroic, but a petty and vicious act, stemming from frivolity. Allegedly against the Plutarch of old, this literary composition will address anonymous soldiers.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, this narrator seemingly promises not to use the blood of the soldiers to create his own name (merging it with "his ink"), insinuating that an artist like Plutarch writes but does not participate in the war, and benefits by glory while the anonymous others do their dirty job, suffer and die. The narrator will, instead, listen to the mouth of the soldier as a witness and will mention the eye that was shut anonymously (most likely, of the unidentified fallen). The narrator will dwell lengthily on the fathers and husbands who preferred to complete life without showing cowardice (presumably, preferred to live instead of serving and participating in the army's deeds) and even "to save" (presumably the lives of others), which is deemed an extra effect, a "luxury".

Completely, however, in character with Plutarch's own narrative techniques, Oppenheimer allows his poem to be read in another way altogether. Another reading is to see the poem as damning the soldiers. The frivolity thus belongs to the troops, as can be seen from the chiastic structure of the first two lines:

A: a poem (*shir*) – B: I will write – C: of Soldiers  
 C: the frivolity – B: that devastated – C: a city (*'ir*)

According to this interpretation, it is the soldiers who send out the rookie. The poem of "Caesars" presents this narrator's own writing of these noble and great persons as supplementing the historical writing of the "Republican" Livy and

<sup>97</sup> The first two lines carry reverse allusions to the great epic poems, Virgil's *Aeneid* 1.1 (*Arma virumque cano*) and Homer's *Iliad* ("city" = Troy) / *Odyssey* 1.2 ("sacked the sacred citadel of Troy").

<sup>98</sup> The first person mentioned is a rookie, albeit an individual, a nameless, lowly one, unlike the great persons Plutarch writes about.

Tacitus, whose texts need completion.<sup>99</sup> In this reading, the soldiers caused others to miss a beat, they came out strongly against the innocent civilian population; they are the fathers and husbands who preferred to “complete” a life, the life of others (i.e. kill them) without showing remorse.<sup>100</sup> In this understanding, the “mouth that raised heirs” may imply illegal commands causing torments during the war, and the “eye shut as a stranger” is the turning of a blind eye on atrocities done during the war.

The reference to the soldiers as “Caesars” is intentionally sarcastic, echoing the Israeli internal protest against the military reality. The second understanding would explain the form of description at the beginning of the poem, where the damage is presented as done to the city, and the harm done to people or their suffering is not mentioned, as if by way of beautifying the portrayal. If the negative at the end of the poem is applied only to first verb (“rhyme”), the poet basically confesses he will merge the blood of the fallen soldiers with his ink to become one with them. Earlier, he claims he will give the soldiers “old age”, instead of immortality, which literally means he will kill them in his description. This act corresponds to what Plutarch did in his stories of lives; he in fact ended lives by giving his protagonists *Lives*. By this deed, the poet parallels the action of the soldiers in “completing lives”, whether their own or those of others. There is indeed a parallelism between the poet and the soldiers, seen for instance in the chiastic structure shown above: the poet will write a song as the soldiers destroy a city. Like these soldiers/Caesars with their ambitious expansionist plans (note the “celestial bodies”), the poet himself seeks wide spaces for his poem. So the moral stand of Plutarch might ultimately be applied against Plutarch the biographer after all.

### III

Our brief survey of the appearances of Plutarch in the Neo-Hebrew literature from the seventeenth century to our current generation shows a consistent interest in the Chaeronean within the nascent Hebraic culture. Plutarch has been continuously read, consulted, cited, studied, alluded to and even criticised over the generations. It may be that the figure of Plutarch “the sage” appealed to the emerging modern Jew as one whose moral and epistemological

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<sup>99</sup> This poet will give “open spaces” to his brow (literally “to my nose”, written *le api* which might be read without diacritical signs “to the epic” *la epi*); the poet will write an epic of his own.

<sup>100</sup> “Saving but a luxury” should thus be literally interpreted as looting items of the killed.

strength derives from its position at a threshold of several worlds at once: Plutarch was a traditionalist yet also innovative in his approach, a typical nostalgic elite member of Greek society in its current state of subjection to Roman power, but also a moral critic, who was not afraid to chastise the protagonists of both cultures. Yet, more than anything else, Plutarch was a versatile author, whose prolific writings made him an obvious candidate to be adopted by the new Hebraic republic of letters struggling to create its own identity, tradition and heroes.

Plutarch took on a new significance with the establishment of the Jewish state. The three poets discussed above made Plutarch again an outside figure to the Hebraic literary world as it developed in Israel, by highlighting three different Israeli spatial contexts: the communal society of the Kibbutz, the urban alienated society next door to a war-stricken territory and a war zone. Plutarch, who so often used barbarian figures as foils to stress the virtues or vices of his Graeco-Roman protagonists, was now employed himself by "barbarian" (Israeli) authors as a backdrop to evaluate the new social and literary situation that receives his own works. It is hoped that the analysis of these poems has shed light on the topic of the reception of Plutarch in one of the national revival movements of modern history and complemented the survey of Neo-Hebrew literature in the first part from its inception to the fully-fledged translation of the *Lives*. As usual, however, with the study of classical reception, the chapter has not only answered how the past has been received in a later period, but also how modern and recent writers were able to underscore facets which were not so pronounced in antiquity. In the case of Plutarch, we have been guided to appreciate his stance as an outsider, the fact that the composition of the *Lives* involved an act of public sharing, the way the past was encapsulated and encoded in the pages of the text to be decoded in the act of reading, and the manner in which the *Lives* were subversive and at the same time helpful in perpetuating "imperial" militaristic reality – aspects which are all still universally relevant to modern political and literary ideological discussions.

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